• Mary Lee Settle • Fred Chappell • Jim Wayne Miller•

NOW AND THEN

The Appalachian Magazine

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services/Institute for Appalachian Affairs • East Tennessee State University

New Appalachian Writing

Davy Crockett on How to Hunt Bears from Jo Carson's new play, *The Bear Facts*

"Nonnie and the Big Talker" from Lee Smith's new book, *The Devil's Dream*

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Prose • Poetry • Profiles
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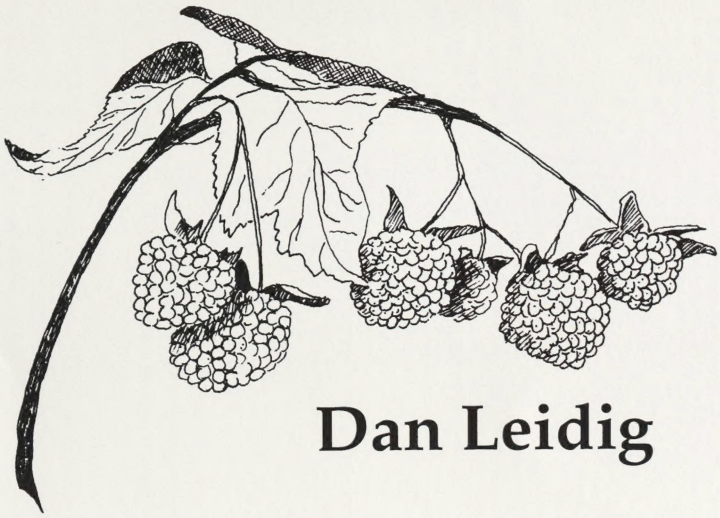
Paradise Reclaimed



Dan Leidig

Rousted out at dawn for my first berrypicking
I am buttoned, battened, booted, and bound;
I am anointed with coal oil and turpentine
against pestiferous adversaries real and imagined
by a thoroughly thorough mother.
She gives me exceeding large instructions for my safety —
and an embarrassingly small tin bucket for my assurance —
and sends me forth with a final caution
which she intends as no contradiction:
"Watch out for snakes and stay close to your brothers!"
But nothing — neither the endless preparations
nor the heavy dews that soak my britches
nor silent brothers trudging toward their thorny destiny —
nothing can dampen the spirit of beginnings.
Even Pepper the pup senses adventure, chasing unseen quarry
along every byway enroute to the secret patch,
discovered only yesterday and reported at the supper table
by my oracular and infallible eldest brother, Sam,
who leads us toward that still unravished succulence
waiting in the shade beyond Pump Barnett's upland pasture:
clusters of huge blackberries in their prime,
waiting, as Sam has assured, only to be shaken into our buckets.
We approach Eden breathlessly, but the sound of laughter
alerts us to trespass: the unspeakable Scalf tribe,
whose unerring espionage is legendary,
has, like the smug Little Pig, got up an hour early,
and has taken possession of the promised patch.
And so, in accordance with the ancient laws of berrying —
and Junior Scalf's lingering scowl —
we move on to other and slimmer pickings.
I am secretly glad for the unknown pioneers
who have come and gone before us
breaking trails and tramping out avenues and cul-de-sacs
in the towering barbed jungle of berrydom.
My hands learn the pains and the indelible stains of possession
and the sound of my unsuccess plunks slowly across the world
from the distant loud bottom of my cavernous bucket.
It is now clear that I was sent by God and my mother
to try the patience of older brothers.
They speak to each other as if I were not present:
"He's spilled his berries again."
"He's eating more than he keeps."
"You get him uncaught this time."
The intelligent vines that snatch my cap and grab my spine
at the very instant I know I've sprung free,
the invisible chiggers and the upstart junebugs and the evil sun
and the thorns in the flesh and the salt in the eyes
instruct me forever about the earthly paradise
and spill me and my labored fruit in fall after fall.
I give up, collapsing under an elm, sure in my knowledge
that we will all die here impaled by thorns and thirst.
Through the haze I hear my brother Milton chiding me
about my good fortune; I've slept through;
it is finished, over, we've come through.
And it's true! My brother's buckets are brimming gloriously black.
We turn homeward. I lag behind,
postponing my empty confession.
But God speaks to my brothers
just before the last bend in the road,
just before home and doom loom into view
they stop. And full of grace they fill my bucket from theirs,
festooning it with abundant treasures large and sweet,
picked in the woodland shade for such a moment.
Grinning, they send me on ahead
to announce our triumph over the world, the flesh,
and Junior Scalf, who, racing home ahead of us,
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More poetry by Dan Leidig inside along with an interview by Brenda Acton Neal on page 16

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Fall 1992
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region. When you become a Friend of CASS ($10 per year, $12 for institutions and libraries), you receive a subscription to *Now and Then*.

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Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

Appalachia and the Art of Living

Now and Then magazine is the realization of an early ideal. When the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services was established in 1984, interested faculty and professional staff members at East Tennessee State University drew up an extensive and ambitious list of goals and objectives for this new regional studies program. One of our main objectives was to develop publications comparable to those of other Appalachian Studies programs. Though interest in Appalachian Studies at ETSU dated back to the mid-1960s, no regional publication had ever been produced on this campus on a regular, sustained basis.

We knew that we wanted to build upon this university's strengths in expository writing, graphics and photography. We created a format that conveyed the full interdisciplinary range of Appalachian Studies to the interested layperson, not just to the professional scholar. To give *Now and Then* a high degree of coherence, we decided that each issue would be devoted to a particular theme.

Beginning with our second issue, which dealt with Appalachian women, *Now and Then* has addressed a wide variety of topics, such as music, the Cherokee, Black Appalachians, children, veterans, health, rural and urban life in Appalachia, social activism and regional arts. This is the third time in nine years that *Now and Then* has focused upon contemporary literature in Appalachia.

Appalachian literature has expanded and matured over this past decade. The work of the writers who have contributed to this issue of *Now and Then* proves that it is possible to retain meaningful ties to a specific region and still evoke universal concerns and sentiments without lapsing into naive, provincial sentimentality.

Helen Lewis has said that Appalachians are not yesterday's people but tomorrow's people: the profound yet personal literature presented here suggests that Appalachian writers already know what many of their fellow Americans still need to learn about the art of living.

Texts without context lack texture; they give us nothing to hold onto. As the global revival of nationalism and regionalism should be telling all of us, grand, overarching abstractions, whether architectonic, ideological, graphic, musical or literary, have failed because they are inhuman in scale. They do not permit the close identification and intimacy that makes life (and art) meaningful for most people in Appalachia or elsewhere.

As I said earlier, *Now And Then* represents the realization of an early ideal. To keep this ideal alive, we need your help. During this period of economic downturns, shortfalls and cutbacks, your financial assistance and moral support can help to insure that there is a future for *Now and Then*. Your gifts and donations to the Friends of CASS are greatly needed and will be gratefully appreciated.

—Richard Blaustein, Director

Now and Then Magazine

Encouraging Excellent Writing

Before I moved to this part of the country, I worked for the Colorado Litter Campaign. My husband thought that was dandy work for a writer. He said, "Well, you always wanted a literary job."

Since that time I've found work with printed matter that is not just the kind stenciled on aluminum cans. As editor of *Now and Then* I've had the chance to work with exceptional writing. This issue includes the kind of literary output I particularly like: writing that shows the strength of poetry and prose being produced by Appalachians these days.

We are really pleased to have a collection of poems by Dan Leidig. Plenty of people know Leidig as a fine teacher at Emory & Henry College and editor of *Iron Mountain Review*, but few know him as a poet. Brenda Neal induced this shy writer to send some of his poetry to accompany her interview with him. Poetry editor Jo Carson liked his work so well she recommended publication of all of them. We have included quite a few poems from other writers as well, a record number for *Now and Then*. We had to. There was so much we liked.

We've compiled some fine and interesting prose, too: an excerpt from Lee Smith's forthcoming novel, *The Devil's Dream*, a remarkable essay from Jim Wayne Miller and an excerpt from Jo Carson's new play about Davy Crockett, *The Bear Facts*. We also have personal stories from students in an ETSU class "Appalachian Autobiography" taught by Fred Waage.

We are pleased to have Jane Harris Woodside's in-depth interview with the outspoken, entertaining Mary Lee Settle, who has set much of her fiction in West Virginia.

This doesn't represent work by all of our favorite writers by any means; it's just a sampling. There is a healthy output of good writing going on in this region. Unfortunately, the economy isn't so healthy these days. I'd like to urge you to make a special effort to encourage excellent writing from the region by supporting small presses and regional publications such as this one. Your support is crucial, and this is important work. As George Ella Lyon suggested in *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel:* "Let us, as individuals, as communities, find new ways to nourish artists knowing that, as we support their separate voices, together they give us the story of ourselves."

And as I think about my former job, I realize I should also urge you to dispose of this magazine properly—recycle it to your friends.

—Pat Arnow, Editor

Correction

The fall 1991 "Media" issue of *Now and Then* featured poems by Harold Branam and David Black. Unfortunately, we switched the poets' names, giving each credit for the other's poem. "Technological Man Meditating" is by Harold Branam, and "The New Reconstruction" is by David Black. Apologies to both poets.

Archives of Appalachia

Keeper of Memories

Today, we were saddened by a telephone call from Jay McGranahan telling us that his mother, Jeanne Rasmussen, passed away yesterday, January 30, 1992. He commented how much it meant to his mother that the results of her labor as a writer and photographer in the coal mining regions of Appalachia have been preserved in the Archives. She did not want her life's work to be lost or forgotten. As archivists, we are fortunate to meet people like Jeanne Rasmussen who have dedicated so much of their lives to this region. We feel honored to be a part of keeping her memory and sharing with others her words and pictures.

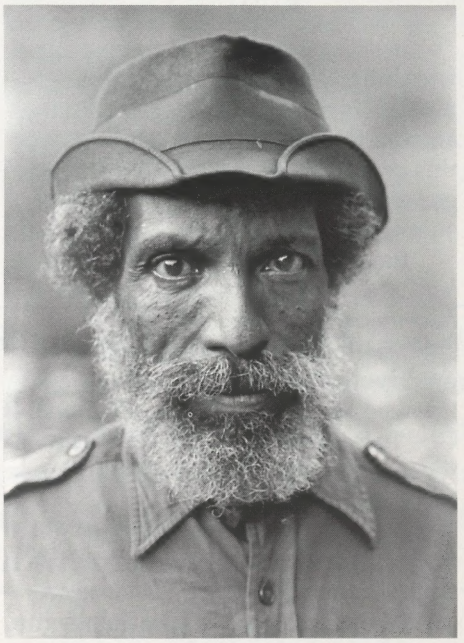
In 1974 Jeanne Rasmussen wrote an essay to introduce an exhibit of her photographs of the Appalachian people. Her words explain her work and offer advice to writers and photographers interested in the mountain region:

For seven years I photographed the hills and "hollers," coal mines, camps, mine disasters and people of Appalachia. In spite of the tragedy I've witnessed — (I've covered six major disasters in seven years), it has been an experience that has deepened my awareness, heightened my sense of compassion, forced me to look with greater objectivity. I have witnessed an historic movement in the coalfields and been fortunate enough to document — on film and tape — much of that history. More than that, I have shared in the struggle and participated in the progress.

If I have learned anything from these experiences, it is that the stereotyped image of poverty and ignorance cannot accurately or honestly be applied to a culture so endowed with inner courage, spirit and strength. It is easy to emphasize the tragedy (and there is much of it here), to quote only the angry and rebellious, to storm the citadels of the unjust, to portray only the harshness of life. Yet I would caution the sensitive writer or photographer to probe deeper beneath the surface, for here lies not only the mineral wealth of the nation (providing light and warmth and material comforts for its citizens), but also the spirit and freedom of its people.

During these past seven years I have learned much about the value of humor, compassion, respect and friendship. It was with this advantage that I aspired to photograph the people of Appalachia, and it is my sincere hope that those who view my pictures will see commitment and a responding to life.

—Jeanne M. Rasmussen, 1974



For further information about the Archives and its collections, write or call: Archives of Appalachia, Box 70665, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City TN 37614-0665, (615) 929-4338.

—Norma Myers, Head, Archives and Special Collections
—Marie Tedesco, Public Services Archivist

One of Jeanne Rasmussen's photographs of the Buffalo Creek disaster of February 1972 is featured on the back cover. Rasmussen's photographs and biographical sketch are included in the Archive's column in the Activism issue of ***Now and Then,*** *Fall 1990.*

Coal miner Bully Hale, Camp Creek, W. Va. This is one of many Jeanne Rasmussen photographs of Appalachia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Now housed in the Archives of Appalachia, these pictures extensively cover the Buffalo Creek disaster, women coal miners and individuals.

Carroll Reece Museum

Resources for Writers

When writers wish to create an image of times past, knowledge of customs of those times is important. Even if a work is fiction, historical accuracy is necessary. It is the writer's authenticating details — the settings and descriptions of everyday life — that make a story plausible. For either fiction writers or scholars, the collections of the Reece Museum can serve as an excellent resource.

The museum collections contain artifacts of the history of the Washington County/Johnson City area. Also included are costumes, musical instruments, paintings, drawings, prints and other artworks, many by Appalachian artists of Appalachian themes.

In addition to its collections, the museum provides an active exhibition program that shows a range of art styles. These can be used as background or for stimulating the creative process. With its changing exhibits, associated programming and large collections, the Reece Museum becomes an excellent haunt for the writer, a place for inspiration and research.

Writers — and readers — are encouraged to support the museum through the Friends of the Reece Museum (FORM). In addition to providing support to the museum, FORM members receive the newsletter with listings of events and exhibits sponsored by the museum. For more information contact the museum at ETSU Box 70660, Johnson City TN 37614, or call 615-929-4392.

—Blair White, Curator

The Devil's Dream

Nonnie and the Big Talker

by Lee Smith

When Nonnie Hulett climbed down off her daddy's wagon to stand before him at Mossy Branch, Ezekiel Bailey thought she was just about the prettiest thing he had ever seen in his whole life. It made him happy to look at her, and he stood there looking at her for the longest time. Nonnie had tied her dark hair back as severely as possible, but the jolting wagon had loosened it, so that black curls framed her face, red and swollen from crying. When she finally looked up at Ezekiel, her brown eyes had yellow sunbursts in them, like cat eyes. The way Nonnie's eyes looked reassured Ezekiel somehow. He liked cats, such as Garnet Stump's old tomcat Henry Boy, laying over there in the sunshine right now. And Zeke knew how to take good care of things — the animals, the house, the church, the land and what grew there. He took good care of everything. Nonnie would be his wife. He would take good care of her, too. Slowly, he smiled at her. Nonnie did not smile back. She balled up her handkerchief in her little fist and ground it into her face, crying even harder.

Zeke did not know what to do then. He turned around to look at old Elder Stump up on the porch for guidance, but Elder Stump just shrugged and puffed on one of his asthma cigarettes, peering down at them all through the smoke. It looked like trouble to him. Meantime Nonnie's grim-faced daddy was unloading her things from the wagon without a word, box after box, leaving them piled in the yard. She sure had a lot of things. Her ugly sister had presented Ezekiel with a little bag of fried pies which he ate automatically, one after the other, watching Nonnie. Ezekiel did not look at the sister, who was poking around the yard and exclaiming over this and that and acting the fool in general. Nonnie sobbed louder and stamped her little foot.

Elder Stump sighed. *This will be a hard row to hoe,* he thought. Maybe he had made a mistake. Maybe he should of knowed enough not to meddle with nature, should of knowed to leave well enough alone. If God had wanted Ezekiel to have a wife, maybe He would of got him one His Ownself.

Nonnie's daddy took off his hat and kissed her and then put his hat back on and got back in the wagon. The ugly sister got back in the wagon, too. Nonnie's daddy slappped the reins and said *Giddap,* and before you knew it, they were gone around the bend of Mossy Branch and out of sight, stirring up dust which hung for a long long time in the still hot air.

Nonnie and Ezekiel just stood there. Joe-pye weed and black-eyed susans bloomed all along the road, bleeding hearts by the gate. Little yellow butterflies flew everywhere.

Elder Stump felt old and foolish, surveying this scene from his porch. It was not a thing like the time when Garnet had come to him, a young girl not yet 16, full-figured and trembling, with a look on her face that he knew. Bent double, barely breathing, Elder Stump could see her still, his bride of sixty years before, could feel a stirring of the heavy passion he felt then. He had to go lay down. Without a word he turned and disappeared through the open door, leaving Ezekiel Bailey and Nonnie Hulett standing out in the sun in the heat of the day like their feet had growed roots and planted them there at Mossy Branch. It was August 10, 1880.

For about a week, Nonnie Hulett continued to cry. She tried to cook and do the chores, for she was a good girl and knew she had done wrong and knew that this was to be her lot, but to her surprise, Ezekiel would not let her do much, coming up behind her to take the skillet out of her hand, to carry the pail of water, to feed the chickens that fluttered around the yard. Nonnie couldn't get over it. She had never seen a man do such things. Once when Zeke grabbed the broom and was sweeping the porch off himself, Nonnie raised her eyebrows and looked questioningly at old Elder Stump who sat wreathed in smoke in his rocking chair, and for the first time, Elder Stump smiled back at her, his mouth full of black teeth, but then he fell to coughing and failed to answer the question which she hadn't really asked.

Elder Stump was smoking as many of his asthma cigarettes as he could manage, trying hard to stay alive. Several times lately in a dream he had seen a great golden angel flying down from Heaven like a chicken hawk, swooping down low to get him, but so far Elder Stump had managed to hold off this angel, for he intended to stay alive long enough to see how things would turn out.

One time when Zeke had taken the bucket from her and set off for the springhouse, Nonnie turned to the old man and said, *He don't talk much, I reckon,* and Elder Stump said, *No he don't.* This was the only question Nonnie ever asked about him, as blue cloudless day after day came and went, and she got used to life on Mossy Branch. Truth to tell, it was a

relief to be shut of that bossy Zinnia! Gradually it dawned on Nonnie that she would be the mistress here, and since Ezekiel seemed disposed to spoil her just as much as her father had ever done, she could have her way without working her fingers to the bone like all the other women she'd ever known. Nonnie had time to wash her long hair and sit out in the sun to let it dry, she had time to dream in the slow afternoons while Ezekiel hoed corn and the old man dozed on the porch. Nonnie had time for herself, golden and slow and sweet as the thick honey that came from Ezekiel's hives up on the mountain behind the house. She kept crying, dedicated to grief, but it grew harder and harder to remember exactly what she was crying about.

The old man slept in one side of the double cabin, she and Ezekiel on the other side. Ezekiel had his bed tick and she had hers, and her own quilt, and her own two feather pillows that she had brought from home.

Every night, Ezekiel waited until she had put on her night dress and taken down her hair and stretched out on the bed tick and closed her eyes before he came into the cabin. Then he entered as quietly as ever he could, yet the whole cabin would shake with his step. While Nonnie feigned sleep, he went to the foot of her bed and left a present there, something he loved, something he thought was pretty — a piece of crystal quartz he'd found one time up on Cemetery Mountain, a pearl button, cornflowers from the field, a steelie marble, an iridescent snakeskin. Nonnie's presents were lined up on the floor at the foot of her bed. Alone in the cabin, she had to smile in spite of herself, looking at them. She did not know what to make of this big, gentle man. But she was tired of tears, and one day, she found herself humming a tune.

Then finally there came the night when a screech owl woke her. It sounded like the screech owl called her name. Nonnie sat up in bed and looked at Ezekiel who always slept like a child or a dead man, flat on his back, hands clasped on his chest, breathing audibly. It seemed to Nonnie that he never dreamed; at least he never gave the appearance of dreaming. Moonlight streamed in the open door that night and made a silver path across the cabin floor, right across Ezekiel, who looked like an angel sleeping there.

Idly, Nonnie held out her hand, so that the moonlight fell upon it, too, silvering her whole arm. Then suddenly Nonnie got that powerful feeling she got sometimes, that feeling she had gotten ever since she was a little girl, when all of a sudden she just *had* to do something — nevermind what — she just had to make something happen. At these moments Nonnie was filled with both lassitude (or a profound final kind of boredom) and wild energy. What she couldn't stand, right then, was whatever was happening at the time. She had to do something, *change* something.

Some people would hold that it was this money which spoilt Nonnie Bailey ... that she would not have gone and done what she done if she hadn't kicked in the chimbly and found that little burlap bag.

Nonnie stood up and took off her nightgown and stepped into the moonlight, looking down at her silver body. Her breasts were large now because of the pregnancy, and her navel stuck out on her firm high belly. She felt like she was bursting right out of her skin. She stood in the moonlight admiring herself, breathing hard, waiting to see exactly what she would do next. Then she walked over to Ezekiel and knelt beside his bed tick and leaned over him, brushing his chest with her hair. The screech owl called out to her again, clear as could be, and even if she couldn't quite make out what he said, she knew what he meant all right.

Wake up, she said to Ezekiel. She poked him in the side.

Zeke stirred but did not wake. Even the hair on his chest was silver in the light of the moon.

Zeke, Nonnie said. *Wake up.* She poked him again, harder.

Zeke opened his eyes and looked at her. *God almighty*, he said.

For the first time since her arrival on Mossy Branch, Nonnie started to giggle.

Why looky here, she said.

R.C. Bailey, Nonnie's Melungeon baby, was born on February 14, 1881, about a month after Ezekiel and Nonnie were married in Elder Stump's cabin by Dr. Paul Trott, a traveling evangelist on his way to Knoxville. Dr. Paul Trott had red hair and a little red moustache. *Man and wife*, he said. Ezekiel heard him say it. Ezekiel had a wife now. Then Dr. Paul Trott rode off in the rain and Nonnie kissed Ezekiel and Elder Stump died, just like that. He took a little shallow rattling breath, tried to say something, and died. It was like he had put it off to see them wed.

When folks came to the house for the laying out, they were surprised to find that Ezekiel had such a pretty, pregnant wife. They told it up and down the hollers until they got tired of saying it: *Did you ever feature Ezekiel Bailey wed, now?* and *Whar did she come from*? and *Who do you reckon her people are*? They buried Elder Stump in the Chicken Rise graveyard not forty feet from the church he had started himself and built with his own hands, and when the first shovelful of red dirt hit the pine coffin, Ezekiel felt as though he, too, would die; but this feeling passed quickly, as most feelings did with him, and by the time R.C. was born a month later, he had almost forgotten the old man although they named the baby for him, Reese, because the granny woman said they ought to, and so did some people at church. Ezekiel had not known that Elder Stump had this first name, Reese, or any first name at all.

Then Nonnie cried because she had wanted to name the baby for her father, so the baby's name turned out to be Reese Claude Bailey, too much name for such a little baby, and they took to calling him R.C. R.C. was a colicky baby who wouldn't sleep and had a high thin cry like a cat mewing. Nonnie had been real curious to see whether he would look like Jake Toney or not, but she didn't mention

this to Ezekiel who didn't know anything about Jake Toney and had never questioned the condition in which Nonnie had first appeared to him.

R.C. did have curly hair like Jake Toney, but fair skin like Ezekiel Bailey. He wouldn't sleep at all. One night, sitting up with him by the fire, Nonnie got so tired and so mad that she kicked at the chimbly in petulant disgust, the way she often stamped her little foot, and lo and behold, one of the chimbly rocks fell out as neat as you please, and she saw that there was something stuck in the hole. Nonnie plopped the crying baby down in its cradle and leaned forward to see what she'd found.

It was a burlap bag full of money, saved by Garnet and Elder Stump for a rainy day. Nonnie, terribly excited, sifted through old silver dollars and paper money while the fire leapt up in the hearth and the March wind wailed outside. Just beyond the circle of firelight, Ezekiel slept on. Nonnie would not wake him, she'd wait until morning to give him this news which would not mean much to him anyway, she knew it wouldn't. He didn't give a damn about money. Meanwhile she would hold her baby in one arm and run the fingers of her other hand through this money and think what she might do with it.

Later, some people would hold that it was this money which spoilt Nonnie Bailey finely and fectually, that she would not have gone and done what she done if she hadn't kicked in the chimbly and found that little burlap bag. But others held that Nonnie Bailey was obviously spoilt long before she came over to Mossy Branch, that what we will do is buried deep inside us all anyway, like a dark seed. Be that as it may, the burlap bag contained just enough money — not much, actually, to give Nonnie Bailey a sense of what she could not have. It contained just enough money for her to order off for some silky rose-colored cloth and some pink mother-of-pearl buttons, some tortoise-shell combs and some magazines. It might be that the magazines were the most damaging of all, for in them Nonnie could see page after page of women dressed to the nines (bustles and mutton sleeves and tiny waists and huge plumed hats, in the fashion of the day which Nonnie would have given her eye teeth to model.)

Can't none of em hold a candle to you, Zeke said, looking at the magazine with her.

Nonnie knew this was true. She had always been beautiful. Now she realized that she was more beautiful than the ladies in the magazines, and since she was the missus here and could do as she pleased, she sewed a dress from her bolt of rosy silk cloth and put the mother-of-pearl buttons up the front of it, lace at the neck. But then she just sat on the porch wearing the dress and rocking R.C., with no place to go. She wore the dress to the Chicken Rise Church once, then never again, because of how the other women looked at her. She was the prettiest woman in the county, but it didn't matter. She would rot here in these mountains and be damned.

When Nonnie knew she was pregnant again, she folded the rose silk dress away carefully, regretfully, storing it in a special place in the loft even as she stored that image of herself away in a special place in her mind where she would take it out and look at it sometimes as the years passed.

Durwood, her funny baby, was born in 1884, all smiles and giggles and kicking feet from the first it seemed, as different from whiny R.C. as day from night. Durwood looked exactly like his daddy.

It tickled Ezekiel to death to have the two baby boys around, he was always playing with them, doing *eeny meeny miney mo catch a nigger by the toe* over and over with R.C.'s tiny fingers until even R.C. shrieked with joy. You would think nobody in the whole world had ever been a daddy before, to watch Ezekiel Bailey with his babies, and folks talked it up and down the creek, how he acted, for most men would not have a thing to do with a baby, leaving it all up to the womenfolks, as is proper. Zeke's behavior was unmanly. But it allowed Nonnie to primp and preen and pleasure herself, so that she didn't resemble a missus at all, in a way that made the other men cast an envious eye at Zeke and a more lingering look at Nonnie, a look that made the other womenfolks downright uneasy. *They was something quare about them from the start*, they'd say later. *I knowed it was something wrong over thar*, they'd say then.

Then in 1885 came the baby that was born dead, and after they buried him, Nonnie dreamed for seven nights running that they had buried her, too, down in the cold black ground. Every night she woke up choking, with the taste of dirt in her mouth.

Ezekiel took this to be her sign.

And because Ezekiel knew about such things — signs and portents — how God reveals himself to men — Nonnie believed him.

They had to break the ice in the river in order to baptize her right away. Nonnie stood shivering and terrified on the riverbank in the cutting wind, still weak from loss of blood, clinging to Ezekiel's strong arm beside her, hoping her sign was a true one, hoping she would not die when the preacher plunged her beneath the icy water. She could still taste the dirt of the grave in her mouth. Behind her, the folks from the Chicken Rise Church were singing *Shall we gather at the river* in the old high sad way. Suddenly Nonnie felt completely alone, alone as are we all in that final moment of our lives, and it was as if the world and all its bright trappings streamed past her like the wind and was gone forever, and she was left on the bleak brown shore of the Dismal River by herself, with the dirty grayish ice before her, the sluggish dark river moving mysteriously beneath it where they had broken the ice, and for the first time Nonnie was lifted out of the moment of her life and thrust toward something beyond herself. The others seemed far, far away, singing

> Shall we gather at the river
> Where bright angel feet have trod
> With its crystal tide forever
> Flowing by the throne of God.

At that very moment the sun came out from the mass of leaden clouds which covered half the sky, and the ice on the river changed

Continued on page 28 ➡

Lynn Powell

Poem for the Second Born

A life-sized plastic heart tilted
through our childhoods on your blue dresser.
Half relic, half toy, we used to open it like a huge
hickory nut emptied of its meat, then snap it shut.
You have to share that heart, Mother would remind us
when I would grab one half and you the other.

We schooled ourselves with the heart.
Same with the World Book's volume H:
the transparent Human man we made and unmade,
peeking inside, then covering, layer by clear layer,
bones with blood with organs
with the costume of skin.

Last time home I found in my bedroom closet
a box marked *Save for Lynn* and packed with ribbons,
class portraits, girl scout badges, straight A's, and a letter
I wrote to Houston: *Dear Mommy,*
I skinned my knee, stumped my toe, scraped
my shin, and a bee stung me today …,
the blue-lined paper with its labored letters creased
and recreased by our young mother leaning
on the rail of a hospital bed, following the lift
and fail of your small chest.
Beneath your vest of bandage,
the red swipe, jagged with stitches,
was already blooming its keloid rib. …

In intensive care, the nurses said you lived
because you knew that you were loved.
What I remember is how you grinned,
walking slowly down the steps of the airplane,
holding Mother's hand, wearing blue shorts and jacket
and a too-many-galloned, white cowboy hat.
No outings and no spankings for a year, the doctor warned.
And no roughhouse, Mother added.
I don't remember if you ever whined
your frail advantage, though I know I longed
to squeeze your arms and shake you
as the cruel school marm in stories shook the innocents —
but feared your damaged heart would split open.

I always tell my students, *Writing is an excavation*,
by which I mean there's something lost, and draft by draft
the dark it's buried in is brushed away.
My fourth-grade autobiography
neglects to mention you, though it points out
I'm a member of the tonsils out club, and my birthstone is opal.
Yours is garnet.
And any stranger on the beach can see the scar you
effortlessly wear and extrapolate
a heart that heals.

Sword Drill

Boy, girl, boy, girl, boy, girl, that great
misery of childhood, worked its torment:
the boys on either side of me whispering to girls
on other sides of them, then glancing at me to decide.
Cat had got my tongue and kept it
ever since I'd passed the note to Eddie Pittman:
Do you stll love me? Yes. No. Circle one.
He circled *No* , then chased Cathie Smith at recess,
the girl with thin white straps beneath her shirt.
Now I stared down at the Old Testament's Table
of Contents, mouthing the list, the fire on my face
drenched only when ATTENTION! jerked
the wriggle of a line of 10-year-olds at Baptist Training Union
to straighten and suck in its breath.
Staring straight ahead, gripping our Swords, we stood
on the stage of the Fellowship Hall, on the dark bank
of the golden river the spotlights poured right in front of us.

The church had issued Bibles, stiff
as dictionaries in black cardboard covers —
but for luck I held my own, autographed
inside by Vince Cevera (the evangelist who saved me)
and covered with leather, the color of Jesus' words.
Now the *genuine cowhide* was slick with the sweat
of my palm. DRAW SWORDS!
We drew our Bibles up, right hands cradling
the back covers, left hands resting on the fronts,
twenty Bibles hovering, mine red among the black
like a patch of blossom or blood.
I ached to touch the tissue pages,
to get my thumbnail slid inside Isaiah,
but judges watched from their row of straightbacked
chairs behind Miss Swope, who commanded us:
FIRST CORINTHIANS 13:12. REPEAT.
FIRST CORINTHIANS 13:12. CHARGE!

Then all down the line a creak of spines, crackle
of pages, the gulp past prophets, gospels, acts, to the lick
of fingers stuck to dry pages almost ripped nearing
chapter, verse, boys' arms grazing girls', mine scraping
past theirs as I lurched first into the light, *For now*
we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face, clutching
the coveted words, unsheathed
in time.

A native of East Tennessee, Lynn Powell now lives and writes in Oberlin, Ohio. She recently gave birth to her own second born.

His Last Fool Notion

Later

we understood why he had the tops of the white pines cut out — those beautiful pines that grew back of the house and all along both sides of the driveway. And why he argued with the man he hired to do it, claiming the job hadn't been done to suit him.

We certainly didn't understand at the time. Whatever possessed him to want the tops cut out of those lovely trees, a good third of every tree removed, so that they stood amputated, ugly? What kind of damned fool notion! But he was always getting some fool notion nobody else saw the sense of — like the time he thought he'd get rich making cement blocks, or the time he took up raising goats. So, we guessed he was just being Dad, only a little more so. Later we understood that when he had the trees topped, he was already making his last stand.

He never said why he had the white pines mutilated, but it must have been because he thought they were keeping air away from the house. For not long after that he started buying fans — window fans, floor fans, ceiling fans — to increase the circulation of air inside the house. After he had the trees topped, he'd wanted doors left open, so air could freely circulate. But when he got all the fans, and then the air conditioner, he wanted doors kept closed. He had all the windows sealed, the shades and curtains drawn in the room where he'd had the window air conditioning unit placed.

If, a short time earlier, he'd wanted all outdoors inside, now he barricaded himself against the outdoors, against the muggy summer, pollen, against whatever it was; and from the cool darkness of that room, he railed at my mother when she opened a door. For now he seemed to have seen it — this thing he had made a stand against — and it wasn't in the house, it was outside.

But what next came from outside was a tank of oxygen. One night when he wanted more than it was gauged to give, he took a pocket knife and tinkered with the gauge. Later we were told it was a wonder he hadn't blown the whole house up. It simply wouldn't do to go to sleep and leave him free to tinker with the oxygen supply.

Then came nurses, a different one for every eight-hour shift. Sitting up, or lying in bed, he'd stare at a lamp, or a picture on the wall, and decide it wasn't just the way it should be and have the nurse move it. A little later he'd want it moved again. "But we just moved that lamp," the nurse would say. "I don't give a damn. Move it again!"

He'd had a habit, as long as I could remember, of taking something you said and repeating it back to you with a twist, sometimes amusingly garbled. (He was not hard of hearing.) This little perversity he carried to his last stand. I'd driven the 350 miles back home one night and slipped in quietly at 4 a.m. (My brother's car stood in the drive, he'd driven in too, as we'd arranged.) I eased down on the sofa and lay in the quiet house listening to the hissing of the oxygen dispenser in his room. And slept. And woke when the nurses changed shifts at seven. I heard the day nurse, fresh and cheerful, say, "Did you know your two sons came home last night?"

"My two cattle?" I heard my father say.

"Your two sons."

"Yeah."

"They came home last night."

"Yeah."

His oxygen supply had a long transparent hose that permitted him to come from his room to the breakfast table. He sat there, talked a little. His voice was strong but his eyes were almost closed. "Dad, this is Jim," I said. "I drove

in
last night."
He didn't
acknowledge me in
any way. Later he said,
"I'm through talking now," and
told the nurse he wanted up. My
brother and I helped him to his feet, and,
one of us on either side of him, the day
nurse following, making sure the oxygen
line didn't get caught or twisted, we
walked him back to his room and helped
him into bed.

I felt relieved that he no longer knew me, and then ashamed because I felt that way.

I remembered him before he'd had the trees topped, before the fans — how, like an old dog annoyed by playful pups,

he'd mark his place in his history of World War II, leave the table of grandchildren and their loud games and come into the living room — to find another grandchild in his easy chair; how he'd grin, and shake his head, pleased to be so put upon, and coax the grandchild from his chair, or compromise, and let the child sit in his lap.

That sort of scene, that time, was gone forever now. And it was harder and harder for him to come back from that place he'd turn his head to. He even looked different now — his face puffy, his hands and arms covered with purple needle splotches. And then he worsened

in
that heat
wave I seemed
to have brought with
me from Kentucky. He
gulped for air until his stomach
was inflated. Sitting on the gurney as
he was carried out of the house, into the
ambulance we'd called, his face puffed,
his belly round and tight, he looked like a
little Buddha, not at all like our father.

When he could no longer breathe deeply enough, even with the aid of oxygen, a ventilator forced him to inhale. The machine forced oxygen and medication in … and in … and in; then the exhalation came, hideously, on its own. When this procedure was initiated, and he lay propped, a mask taped over his face, he must have felt his breath had already been taken from him, for it was no longer his own breathing.

He must have learned, during this time, that breath was not in the expanding and contracting, the inhaling and exhaling. Breath was somewhere else. Where? He would find it.

For two days and nights he looked for it. For two days and nights he never closed his eyes. He stared, alert, as if he thought death might come through the door, and if death entered, he would see death before death caught sight of him. Maybe he thought he was still at home, where he seemed first to have the notion that death was outside the house, and if he could keep the doors closed and the windows sealed. …

But now he was the house, and death had already entered, was sitting quietly, holding something in his hand. And now death stirred and moved about the house, closing doors, turning out lights. In the dark death held out his hand, and gave my father a stone to breathe.

Jim Wayne Miller

Jim Wayne Miller recently received the Appalachian Consortium's Laurel Leaves Award (along with Wilma Dykeman) for his literary achievements as well as for his dedication to promoting Appalachian literature.

Mary Lee Settle & The Mountain Kingdom:

A World Where Nobody Forgets Anything

Ann Beattie

On a warm, bright October Saturday during the Southern Festival of Books in Nashville, novelist Mary Lee Settle stood at the podium in the Tennessee House Chambers and read the opening pages of *Cage of Bone*, her novel-in-progress.

The first chapter tells of Melinda Kregg, a Virginia-born woman in her 80s who, after a life witnessing wars and revolutions, is ending her days in self-imposed exile in Italy. On the day of her death, she relives the experiences, sometimes brutal and tragic, that marked the beginnings of her rupture with the conservative, privileged world of her youth, the beginnings of her fascination with the world of the "men who went to work in the dark" to mine coal.

Settle is writing this portrait of a rebel, she says, to disabuse folks of the notion that all white liberals come from Massachusettes or Connecticut. The South is quite capable of producing liberals of its own, she contends.

As Settle has often explained, all her books begin with a sensuous image. "When I get that image," she says, "I know I've got a book instead of just a thought." *Cage of Bone* takes its title from a line in "Salome," a poem by George Garrett. It begins with the vision of a 12- year-old girl in a Kentucky coal camp wearing crepe de chine underwear and gold shoes. Once you know who she is and why she's wearing those particular shoes and that pair of underwear, says Settle, you've got the book.

Mary Lee Settle is best known for her 1978 National Book Award novel, *Blood Tie,* set in Turkey, and for The Beulah Quintet, a series of five books that tells the story of Beulah, a valley just up the road from her invented West Virginia city of Canona. She has written 12 novels in all, the most recent of which was *Charley Bland,* published in 1989. She began by writing short stories in college and then tried her hand at plays, only one of which has ever been produced. Eventually she turned to novels, with her first published novel, *The Love Eaters*, appearing in 1954. In addition to her novels, she has published a good deal of non-fiction including her World War II memoirs, a book on Tennessee's Scopes trial, a recent "biography" of Turkey, two juvenile books and numerous articles and reviews.

> ***Appalachia's a new word, and I think it's false as hell.***

Appalachia is frequently home for Settle's characters. It is an Appalachia inhabited from the very beginning by a complex and sometimes explosive cultural mix. Along with the standard-issue Britains, there are Germans, Cherokee and African-American slaves. Even the British draw plenty of distinctions among themselves. There are Scots, Irish and English. And the English themselves break down into subcategories such as renegade indentured servants of the New Light persuasion, upperclass Episcopalians, Methodists and Quakers, all often regarding each other with less-than-perfect understanding and sympathy.

The Beulah Quintet covers more than three hundred years, beginning with the moral failure of Cromwell's revolution in England and continuing to 1980. Settle details the histories of a handful of pioneering families as they become increasingly interrelated and their fortunes rise and fall and take odd turns. The descendents of pre-Revolutionary war squatters inherit plantations and slaves. The well-to-do in the 18th century become poor relations a hundred years later, only to have their kin re-emerge as the last of the paternalistic mine owners in the early 20th century. African-Americans observe the lives of their white blood relations from a discreet distance with more insight and compassion than those distant cousins ever suspect. A 20th century corporate lawyer traces his ancestry back to a 19th century plantation overseer. Settle's Appalachia is both urban and rural, industrial and agricultural. She probes its history for the more compelling truths hidden by myths, myths that often manage to be both

—Jane Harris Woodside

grotesque and amusing.

Born in 1918, Settle spent her youth in Kentucky, central Florida and West Virginia. Although she speaks vividly of the Harlan County mine wars of the 1930s, a period which she is researching thoroughly for the second section of her current novel, she in fact left the Pineville, Ky., area in the mid-1920s as a child of six. She did return to the region in 1929 at the age of 11 when her family moved to Charleston, W. Va., the inspiration for her fictional city of Canona. At 18, she left Charleston for Sweet Briar College in central Virginia. There, as she only recently revealed in a *New York Times* essay written after watching the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings, she was a victim of attempted "date rape." When she reported the incident to school authorities, she writes in the *Times,* "I was subjected to doubt, to prurient questioning by faculty and by the student council, even to a physical examination to see if I was still a virgin… The incident was so demeaning that I left the school the next year." She gave the episode a fictional treatment in her 1971 work, *The Clam Shell.*

My father was a coal operator. And Pineville was a lovely place. There weren't any of those bad people, you know, those communists and all that kind of stuff.

After departing Sweet Briar, she first worked for a summer in the late 1930s as an unpaid stagehand at the Barter Theatre in Abingdon, Va., and then as a model and radio actress in New York. World War II found her enlisted in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Britain, an experience which resulted in her 1966 memoir, *All the Brave Promises.* After living for extended periods in England and Turkey, she is now settled almost, but not quite, in the Appalachians, namely in Charlottesville, Va. There she lives with her husband William "Woody" Tazewell, a retired op-ed editor for the Norfolk *Virginian Pilot* who now writes book criticism.

When I arrived to interview Settle in her Nashville hotel room, she punched the TV button and shut off the Clarence Thomas hearings. "They're just saying the same things over and over again," she said. "The Republicans are trying to prove Anita Hill's lying." A well-known conversationalist, Settle was off and running before I managed to turn the tape recorder on.

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MLS: I was in Pineville, Ky., for the first six years of my life. The only reason I was born in Charleston (W.Va.), it was in the middle of summer, and my mother wanted to go back and be with her family and go to the McMillan hospital. She was from Cedar Grove, W. Va., 18 miles up river from Charleston on the Kanawha. I imagine Pineville didn't have much of a hospital. God knows, Straight Creek, where my father had his mine, didn't have anything and hasn't had since. So I think that they just took me back to get me born, and then I came back to Kentucky in the early fall or something. I don't know. I don't think I was ever told.

But when we went to Straight Creek last spring, I remembered it. And I remembered Pineville so well that I remembered where buildings were missing and everything. It was very easy.

Pineville was a beautiful little town. And then that damn Peabody Coal Company did so much strip mining up the Cumberland River from it that the flash floods started. And now Pineville is cut apart, with two-thirds of it on one side of a retaining wall with a highway on it, and a third of it's on the other side. When I knew it, the road just came by this side of the mountain.

N&T: So you went back there recently?

MLS: I was there last spring. I hadn't been there for 65 years, and then I went back. I've been back there twice now. The first time was in the spring of 1990.

I went back first because I was coming to Chattanooga for the Fellowship of Southern Writers meeting. I said, "All right, I'll go if I can hire a car and go back and see if Pineville is the lovely place I remembered." I thought it was the center of the world. And I got into Pineville, but the road's changed because it used to go right up Pine Mountain and then down into Cumberland Gap. Now it's kind of level around the river.

And I drove around it, and then I saw a sign, and it said, "Pineville Population 2,500." Center of the world for me. And I drove down into the town, and of course the court house is right in the middle. And I remembered one end of the court house, but I didn't really remember the other end.

I remembered that on the corner there had been an ice cream parlor called the Floco. Which was the center of the center of the world. Until I left Pineville, I thought Floco and ice cream were the same thing. And I was driving around the square on Sunday, I looked up, and there on the corner was the sign, "Floco Drug Store." And I remember, my heart just jumped. That gave me my mental map of the place at once. I remembered where our house had been, where the post office had been down on the corner, the picture show right behind it and where the Pineville Hotel had been and where the Continental Hotel had been. I remembered it all.

I walked into the Floco, and it still had its catty-corner door. You remember how they used to make doors catty corner? And I looked down, and I felt like I was so alone. I said aloud, without meaning to, "Oh thank God, they haven't changed the floor" because it was tessellated marble. It was very pretty, and I remembered it as something very beautiful. There were two older men sitting at an ice cream table having coffee. The back end of it had been turned into a drug store, but the front was exactly the same as it had always been. And by the way, if you ever go through there, I think you can get a pimento cheese sandwich for 75 cents, but don't quote me.

One of the men in a white jacket got up from the table, and he said, "How do you do? I'm Mason Combs." And I said, "You're not Buddy's little brother, are you?" And he said, "Well, yes I am. Who are you?" And I said, "I'm Mary Lee Settle." The other man got up from the table, he said, "You're Joe Ed's little sister." It had been 65 years, and we settled down to it. And we remembered everybody. When my husband Woody and I were back then the next year,

everybody was there. The son of Jim Golden who was the attorney who represented the miners who they had up for murder in Harlan county in 1931 was there.

Remember Evarts? It was really the beginning of that mine war, Bloody Harlan. You've heard the phrase Bloody Harlan all your life. You've sung the song, "Which side are you on? Are you gonna be a union man or a scab for J.H. Blair?" J. H. Blair was the sheriff of Harlan county in 1930, maybe 1931, 32, 33. He was defeated — there was a new sheriff in 1934, and I don't know when the election was. But he was the man who deputized all of the mine guards, so they rode around, you know, with machine guns. It was a nasty business, the whole thing.

She wore a rope of pearls, five pearls wide. And she would say things like,"Oh, they're such nice people. They're so rich."

And of course the coal business was terrible then. It was the third year of the [Depression]. The coal business had started going bad about 1927 or 8, and by then it was just a terrible unemployment situation. The coal operators had managed to get rid of the United Mine Workers so the coal miners had no protection at all. And then the National Miners Union came in, the communist union. And they were the people that would feed the children of the striking miners. Now mind you, if you were a miner who went on strike, you were only going on strike against one or two days' work a week. Probably at a dollar a day. It was a very nasty business, the whole thing.

And so, it got to be a national scandal in effect when Theodore Dreiser and John Dos Passos headed a committee of miners. And you know what they did to Theodore Dreiser?

N&T: They ran him out of town.

MLS: You know how they did it? He brought a woman with him. Theodore Dreiser was a — if he'd been a woman, they would have called him a nymphomaniac. What is it? A satyr, I suppose. And he brought a woman with him, and she went into his room about 11 o'clock on a Friday night. And the dashing boys from Pineville sneaked up on the second floor and leaned toothpicks against the door. They were still there at 6:30 the next morning, so they had him up for adultery. They didn't run him out. He left. He was up for criminal syndicalism which was against the law in Kentucky. That's meeting to discuss union matters. And adultery. That's the way they got him.

N&T: How much of that were you aware of as a child?

MLS: I sat on J. H. Blair's lap. My family knew him, my father knew him, but everybody else knew him as well.

N&T: So it wasn't hard to get to sit on his lap?

MLS: Oh, no, no, no.

My father was a coal operator. And you know, Pineville was a lovely place. There weren't any of those bad people, you know, [*Ironically*] those communists and all that kind of stuff. But it's still divided between very conservative people that formed a line of cars and took poor Waldo Frank [a New York journalist] up on top of Pine Mountain and beat him up so that he had to run. And can you imagine that? A New York writer on his way down the mountain in the dark, with his head bleeding — he had a fractured skull from it.

N&T: You left Pineville when you were six and went to Florida?

MLS: That's right. Went to Orlando and then came back to West Virginia in 1929. And left there to go to school. And I never really lived there very much after that. I went to war, and I'd do anything to keep from going back to Sweet Briar. [*Laughing*]

N&T: You were asked once whether some of your material came from family stories, and you said they did sort of, but you always knew they were myths and distrusted them.

MLS: I distrust family stories because I think they have to be proven. There's a wonderful example of this, of a family who was absolutely ruled by an old tyrant of a woman who would say, "If you aren't nice to me, I won't leave you the Lincoln letter." You know this story? The Lincoln letter was the *great* heirloom of the family. So everybody was nice to her until she died at 93. And then they found out that the letter was *to* Lincoln, not *from* Lincoln. So you have to be really careful about that, oh that jewelry and silver that was buried to keep it away from the Yankees and everything like that.

N&T: Did you think of yourself as growing up in Appalachia? Was that a word that meant anything to you?

MLS: No, *Appalachia's* a new word, and I think it's false as hell.

N&T: Why's that?

MLS: Because I have another name for it. I call it the Mountain Kingdom. I think that the minute you say *Appalachia,* you think of poor folks and handmade chairs and all that gunk. These are intelligent, attractive, very proud people of all the professions, you know. They're coal miners, they're manufacturers, they're hillbilly singers, they're opera singers.

There's no way to tie it down, except one way. And that is from western Pennsylvania, all those western counties in Pennsylvania, the coal counties, down through West Virginia and through where Virginia pooches out like that, down through eastern Kentucky and eastern Tennessee, including Nashville and the Cumberland River — to me is a culture of its own. The Mountain Kingdom starts with anthracite and ends with bituminous. Starts in Anthracite, Pa., and ends in Bituminous, Tenn. It's a good part of the world. The people are very proud, they have great dignity, as you know. A great sense of hospitality. Our politics are different, our knowledge of each other is different.

N&T: What do you mean?

MLS: I mean that somebody comes up to Peter Taylor and to me this morning, and says, "Peter, I haven't seen you for 53 years. Mary Lee, you and I went to grade school together." This is a world where nobody forgets anything.

N&T: It's like walking into that drug store —

MLS: That's right. There's been bad labor split in it, but I don't like to see us be paranoid. And I think that the word *Appalachia* brings out a kind of system-

atic labor paranoia.

N&T: Labor paranoia, meaning?

MLS: Meaning the damn United Mine Workers. I love the United Mine Workers. I have a United Mine Workers T-shirt which I wore to a party in Charleston, W.Va., because I knew — this was about two months ago — because I knew that the place was going to be full of coal owners. I had "District 17, United Mine Workers America" [*Motioning across her front*]. I love them.

N&T: Did they all avoid looking at your chest?

MLS: N-o-o-o, they looked the whole time, sexually harassing me. [*Laughs*] And they all sent me books about their side. None of them were any good, you know. Because they knew I was doing research on the mine wars in Kentucky. But I like us. Don't you?

N&T: Well, I'm not one of you, but I like where I'm living.

MLS: You like where you're living. Where are you now?

N&T: Johnson City up in northeastern Tennessee.

MLS: Well, you're right in the middle of it. They're nice people, they're dignified people, and they're proud, proud as paint, aren't they? It seems to me that there's very little class system. Very little. Do you see much in Johnson City? A couple of people with big houses, maybe and —?

N&T: There are old families. I've had limited contact with them. I think there's a feeling that they all know each other from way back —

MLS: That's right. Like the people we had breakfast with in Pineville —

N&T: And that some of us who are new to the area don't have a hope of fitting into that. I don't think I've felt excluded —

MLS: No, you wouldn't be. But that's not snobbery. That's clannishness. You know, in other words, they wouldn't snub you because you went to the wrong school but because you came out of the wrong county. Which is very different.

N&T: What is clannishness's relationship to class?

MLS: I don't think clannishness is class-ridden at all. I think it's extended family and neighbor. In other words, it's spatial.

N&T: And class is —

MLS: And class is hierarchical.

N&T: I'm a little surprised by your observation that Appalachia doesn't have classes because you certainly deal with class in your novels.

MLS: If you look at the novels closely, you'll see that most of them were people who've come in with the coal business. You know, I don't think that the people who've always lived there are very class-ridden. I think they're very clannish.

N&T: The first time I read The Beulah Quintet, I was living in Charlottesville. You know, you pricked a hole in the pretensions to aristocracy that you sometimes find. And I really liked that. What I was really relieved by this time was *The Scapegoat* and how complex you show that situation to be.

MLS: Of course it is. It's full of human beings.

There's a kind of justifiable paranoia on the part of the labor movement. They had a terrible time. But this is one of the most wonderful ironies: On Kanawha boulevard in Charleston, W. Va., is a very, very elegant house that used to belong to Mrs. Nichols. When you went to have tea with Mrs. Nichols, you sat on the edge of your seat and hoped you wouldn't spill anything. She wore a rope of pearls, five pearls wide. And she would say things like "Oh, they're such nice people. They're so *rich*."

The last time, and I'm sure I used it in *The Killing Ground,* the last time I went to that house, it was a United Mine Workers headquarters. And this guy was getting a good salary, was sitting with his feet on the desk, talking about the mine wars and how terrible it had been, saying, "We had this terrible time up Paint Creek." Well, he wasn't even born when they had the terrible time up Paint Creek. And I thought, "Oh, *come on*. Get with it."

I'm a little bit mad at them, too, although I think *Harlan County USA* is just a marvelous documentary film, don't you? And this strike against Pittston, that was marvelous. They're better now. But in the early 60s, I think they let the miners down very badly. John L. Lewis did, in my opinion, by switching over to automation and *not* backing retraining. That was bad. It caused a lot of unemployment. And you know, a joy loader replaced how many? Oh, 20, 30, 40, 50 heads of families. So I think they could have held out for a re-training program, and they were being very cynical about it.

N&T: The union?

MLS: The union and the coal owners.

N&T: Could you expand on that a little bit? Why were they cynical about that?

MLS: The union made the decision that they would be a union for skilled mine workers who could work automatic machines. And the rank and file, who were, you know, frankly not high school educated so they couldn't learn them, were left out in the cold.

N&T: Have they corrected that some?

MLS: No. I think we're just used to it now.

N&T: In *The Scapegoat,* you have the mine owner Beverly and Jake, head of the union local, talking together in the middle of the night, and Beverly says —

MLS: They're cousins.

N&T: "Here we are caught between the company interests and solidarity." Do you think that's still true today? Or less true today?

MLS: I think it's less true today. In the first place, there aren't any paternal mine owners left. It's all owned by the big oil companies. The industry's so completely changed that you just don't get that situation anymore. But then you get somebody like — we were in Abingdon, Va., one time. Reynolds Price and I were supposed to be reading at the Highlands Festival six years ago. They gave us a nice dinner party the night before. And a mine superintendent was sitting there and saying, "There's no such thing as black lung." And I started to go like that [*Leans forward as if about to speak*], and Reynolds reached over and kind of, you know, [*She pats herself on the arm*], "Shh, behave yourself, Mary

The myth is that we were all the younger sons of some damn nobility who didn't have sense enough to come in out of the rain. All this nonsense. We were poor people.

Lee. You're company." [*Laughs*]

N&T: This is maybe one of those impossible questions, but how did growing up there shape you as a writer? Are there any things that come to mind?

MLS: I think possibly because the *story*, the subject is so engrossing. Somebody said that to me one time: "You're lucky. You've got a subject. You don't have to write about the New York suburbs like Cheever and" — what's his name? — "Updike." I don't really care very much what happens to those people, but I care a *lot* what happens to somebody who's out of work in a Kentucky or West Virginia county. And in a way, The Beulah Quintet is my payback.

N&T: For?

MLS: Living off the coal face and not going down there. I didn't do it for very long. But my mother's family was the coal-owning family that I used as the basis for the Laceys.

N&T: Had they been in the area for hundreds of years?

MLS: Well no. My great-grandfather's father died when my great-grandfather and his brother were quite young, and their father left them some money. Their mother married again, and the boys didn't like their stepfather, so they went went to seek their fortune. So one of them, my great-grandfather, invested in the salt business in about 1817. Their older sister had married a man call Aaron Stockton, who'd gone out as a land speculator in the Kanahwa Valley. So one of the boys, my great-grandfather, went into business with him. One of them went on to Kentucky and became the great-grandfather of John Scopes.

N&T: So you're distantly related?

MLS: Yes. Rebellion runs through the family. It's great. I didn't know that until I was writing about the Scopes trial. Strict Presbyterian Dunkard family. So that's how they got out there in about 1817.

N&T: And your father's family?

MLS: My father's family were in Fayette county, W.Va. They went from southside Virginia. They were engineers, seven generations of civil engineers, all the way back to surveyors at the time of Washington. And the Carrs were intellectuals, and they got involved in the Methodist movement, which was the intellectual Christian movement of the 18th century. And my great-grandfather christened me when I was in Pineville Ky. when I was about three. I remember because he was an older man, with a long white beard, and he put some water on me, and they went blah-blah, blah-blah, blah-blah, blah-blah. And he knelt down. Methodists are real good prayers. He prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed. So I just took the holy water and dumped it on his head. So we both got christened.

He gave all of his great-grandchildren a Bible when he christened them. And in the front of the Bible it had his autobiography which consisted of the following — and I won't get the dates straight, so I'll just make them up. "Born 1843. Blah-blah county Virginia. I can't remember. Not in Fayette county, further east. Ordained to preach the gospel, 1860. Joined the 33rd Virginia Infantry, 1861. Re-ordained [*Laughing*] to preach the gospel, 1865. Called by God to the Farmville church and, with the aid of God and the Ku Klux Klan, was able to take my pulpit." [*Laughing*]. Isn't that great?

> ***He prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed. So I just took the holy water and dumped it on his head.***

N&T: When you get back to Charlottesville, would it be too difficult to find the Bible and give me the exact wording?

MLS: No, unfortunately it got destroyed. The dog ate it.

N&T: [*Laughing*] Not really.

MLS: Absolutely.

N&T: Was it a particularly religious dog?

MLS: Yes. A Methodist dog.

N&T: One of the things that I wondered about, you have such a feeling for the land, and the land is such a complex presence in your novels, when you went to Europe, was that very different? Did you ever think about that?

MLS: I thought about it a lot, yes. When I was living in London, I remember I'd take the bus out to Epping Forest. I just wanted to put my feet somewhere that hadn't been stepped on before. You know. The whole of Europe seemed to me to be over lived-in. My son was brought up in England, and he went to school there. And when he got back here, he said, "This country is so young. It's only a couple of hundred of years old." He said, "The main building of the school I went to was 15th century." So it's as if we haven't dug down very far into the ground yet, except to get out coal. We're new, we're new people when you think in terms of Europe.

N&T: It also struck me that in *O Beulah Land,* where they should have been coming to this country trying to start the new Eden, the landscape is like a nightmare.

MLS: That's right. In the 18th century, it was tantamount to a sentence of death for *half* the people who were transported, and you know from *O Beulah Land* that exactly the same laws applied both to the white and the black, except the black was in servitude for his life, and the white was in servitude for the number of years that he'd been sent by the court — seven to 14 years, it usually was. And it was so rough.

See, here again, where the myth clashes with the reality. It was so rough and so terrible that there were two soldiers in the Guards who were caught for desertion, and they were given a choice between a thousand lashes — that's with the cat-o'-nine-tails — and service in the colonies, and they chose a thousand lashes. And that battle in the Braddock campaign during the French and Indian War, it was just pathetic wasn't it? "We was a' beaten." There is that passage in *O Beulah Land* that comes from a contemporary account, a Scottish soldier wandering along in the creek, saying "we was a' beaten. I've seen Donald McDonald up to his hunkers in mud and a' the skin off his head." That's the reason that I think the reality of us is 20,000 times more exciting, valid, alive, proud than the myth of us. What's this protective myth? We don't need it.

N&T: And the myth is?

MLS: Oh, that we were all the younger sons of some damn nobility who didn't have sense enough to come in out of the rain. All this nonsense. We were *poor*

people. As Cleveland Amory says, "Rich people don't emigrate."

A lot of them came to Virginia, though, and made such fortunes in the 18th century in tobacco that they went back to England and became county Tories. And I once was at a dinner party in Dorset, and there were 12 people at dinner, and 10 of their families had made their fortunes in Virginia tobacco in the 18th century. There were a lot of them. They came over as planters, made their money, went back to England and set themselves up as country gentlemen. And they were the backbone of the Tory party in the mid-18th century.

N&T: I went to your reading this morning.

MLS: Oh good. You see forecast in the reading what the next section will be.

N&T: Going back to Kentucky?

MLS: I go back. I send Melinda —

N&T: Another Melinda.

MLS: Yes. Oh, did you know there was another one?

N&T: There's the *Know Nothing* Melinda — and there's the *Killing Ground* Melinda.

MLS: That's right. The *Cage of Bone* Melinda is the great great niece of the original Melinda. Who's Melinda in *The Killing Ground?*

N&T: The sister of Hannah.

MLS: Hannah doesn't have a — Oh God, she has that awful older sister, doesn't she? I couldn't stand her. The one who was worried about what to wear at her brother's funeral. O.K., well this is Melinda as well because it's a family name. Her last name is Kregg. Her father comes from Kregg's Crossing, and their family's very proud. Anyway, she goes with the Red Cross to Pineville, Ky. All of this is historically, completely valid. The Red Cross in Pineville had orders not to feed the children of striking miners.

N&T: From headquarters?

MLS: No, locally. In Kentucky. The Kentucky Red Cross had the orders. So she feeds them anyway because she reckons that children are not responsible. And they use this to get their fathers to scab, to go back to work, so that the Red Cross was in effect used as a scab organization. In this strike situation.

In the book, there's a woman that comes in and brings all the children and says they're all hers. [*Laughs*] And Melinda feeds them all, puts them on the list for food. And then on a Sunday, wearing her Red Cross arm band because she's safe with it — there were a lot of people killed — and she drives her car on a Sunday, up to Straight Creek, where a truck's been blown up, dynamited, and a soup kitchen's been dynamited, and they need food. She takes food out there, and the next morning Melinda walks in and Nurse Gordon, who's the professional head of the Red Cross who's come in from outside and whom everybody calls Nurse Gorgon, fires her. The only thing she can do is to work for the National Miners Union soup kitchen — which is communist. Anyway, that's how she gets involved with the NMU. That's all in the Harlan chapter.

N&T: And that's as far as you've gotten.

MLS: Well chapter, I say, but it's up to a hundred and seventy pages. Because it really is in books. I'm telling you a lot about this book that hasn't been written.

N&T: And it may get changed.

MLS: That's right.

N&T: At some point. But it's on your mind.

MLS: Oh boy, all the time. So after Harlan, the next section will be the Spanish War up into the Second World War. And then the next big section will be the Civil Rights movement.

N&T: But you're going back to Kregg's Crossing, to Beulah territory?

MLS: Only on the way. Only in her name and through the Kreggs that are still there. The book's growing fast, but it's going to be big. You know. I'm talking about two years hence now.

N&T: So two years from now is when you expect it to —

MLS: I hope to have it finished by then. I have to do the Spanish section next. And then after that, the Civil Rights section.

N&T: So it's all in your head.

MLS: Yeah. Wish it would just come out. Like out of my ear. [*Jerks her head to the right and hits it on the left side with the heel of her hand, like a swimmer trying to shake the water out of her ear*]

N&T: Have you tried that yet?

MLS: I've tried everything. The only thing to do is write it.

The Writer As Spider

spins fine threads
of words out of the body,
which also remembers how
to weave the web.

Again and again the spinnerets
of memory make strong silk
which balloons into the air
and fills the page

with gossamer lines.
Or the spigots spin liquid
into a tensile strength,
securing egg sacs,

future words waiting to hatch.
Or the silk, the words
become snares
for the unwary, the unthinking

imagination, just out strolling,
suddenly trapped, enmeshed
and struggling. The writer
pounces then, prays, *this*

is my food
and eats everything.
Writes it all down
in the web of her life.

When the path is beset,
silk from the body
drops draglines and memory
escapes. Up! Quick!

the writer urges,
the world is too dangerous today,
and writes about that, too.
Eventually.

—Christina Pacosz

Christina Pacosz has four books of poetry. She has been an artist-in-the-schools for the Washington State and South Carolina Arts Commissions and a North Carolina Visiting Artist. She currently lives with her husband in Delta Junction, Alaska, where she teaches children with learning disabilities.

Dan Leidig

Dousing for the Genuine

Teaching and Writing in Appalachia

by Brenda Acton Neal

Ann Thomas Templeton remembers her fear when, as a freshman at Emory & Henry College in Southwest Virginia, she was confronted by an English teacher who looked like a 6-feet-4-inch bearded monolith with a thousand-page anthology in tow. But the monolith of Daniel G. Leidig dispelled her fears with a bright smile, and when he began reading, "His voice burned through my senses, bringing to me the beauty of the texture and meaning of language, replacing my fear with enthusiasm," she wrote recently.

A generation of former students, some now respected writers, recall similar sensations. Poet Michael Chitwood wrote of the teacher, "It's his voice I most remember. My friend Wally Smalley and I still talk about how Dr. Leidig's breathy bass can transport you, and you have to be constantly on guard so as not to be lost completely and for good in the sinuous and warm corridors of his learned conversation."

Before he retired in 1991, Leidig referred to himself as a "utility outfielder" in the English department at Emory & Henry, teaching everything from Chaucer to Victorian poetry to literary criticism. However, two courses that Leidig offered many times probably had the most influence on his Appalachian students. Writing Poetry and Folk Literature of the Southern Highlands allowed him to implement his teaching philosophy of seeking to connect the study of established literary works with actual student experience. His goal, he said, was to "help students discover something of the enduring and universal in both what they themselves wrote and excellent contemporary writers from their own region."

Although he sees himself primarily as a teacher, Leidig has been a force in Appalachian literature as well. From 1985 to 1990 he edited ***Iron Mountain Review****, Emory & Henry's literary magazine that focuses each issue on a different Appalachian writer. And he is a writer of finely crafted poetry. He is terribly modest about his own writing and has never sought publication for his work. The poems printed in this issue are some of the few of Leidig's that have seen print.*

On an Indian summer day in late September I drove up the rocky driveway to Dan Leidig's home on a hill overlooking Emory & Henry College. There on his screened porch, with the incessant clamor of crows and in sight of Mt. Rogers and Whitetop, Leidig talked about how his roots in the region inspired him to inspire his students in 36 years of teaching.

N&T: In terms of place, would you describe yourself as Appalachian?
DL: Well, up to the age of five, I was a middle Tennessean. Since then I've been something of an Appalachian, if place is ever enough to define us. I grew up in little communities in Virginia's coal country: Honaker, Tom's Creek, Exeter, Boissevain, Cumberland Gap, Clintwood (which are) in Wise, Russell, Tazewell, Lee and Dickenson Counties.
N&T: I remember that you once regaled your Writing Poetry class with stories of a poetic imagination that was shaped by time spent under your mother's ironing board listening to her recite poetry.
DL: In addition to being taught by some remarkable schoolteachers in Southwest Virginia, my education in literature began at age two with my mother, who liked to recite from the English and American Romantic poets while she ironed, and with my father, a Methodist preacher with an ecumenical heart, who very early acquainted me with the King James Bible.
N&T: Can you recall a time when you first thought of yourself as Appalachian?
DL: In those days not quite so much was made of either the attributes or disadvantages of our Appalachianism. We thought, as with the poor, that our condition was universal. But I probably first became aware that I was an Appalachian with a particular folk and literary heritage when I was a freshman at Lincoln Memorial University. Professor Earl Hobson Smith had his composition class purchase, not a handbook of grammatical rules, but a volume of short

Bill Dennison

Dan Leidig with students from his Writing Poetry class at Emory & Henry College.

stories by his former student Jesse Stuart. Smith instructed us to learn about writing from Stuart's *Tales from the Plum Grove Hills* and to write about something from our own experience every day.

N&T: And that perception was enhanced as you continued your education?

DL: The next year — by then I was a student at Emory & Henry College — I got a lot closer to the conscious study of the folk tradition. I had the good fortune to meet Richard Chase, a local pioneer in the collection of Jack Tales and Appalachian folk songs, who introduced me to the fact that our old folktales and ballads were universal and seminal. Then at Vanderbilt a few years later I discovered the literary accounts of "sondry folk" in Walter Clyde Curry's courses on Chaucer. At the same time I was discovering the great oral traditions of the folk in Donald Davidson's courses in balladry and folktale. I've been exploring the grand connections between those two traditions ever since. As T.S. Eliot — and most all the poets of consequence — remind us, the poetry of a people takes its life from the people's speech and in turn gives life to it.

N&T: What ways have you found to explore that "grand connection" between the literary and folk traditions in your teaching?

DL: Thanks to Steve Fisher, the professor of political science who was the prime mover in giving form to Appalachian Studies at Emory & Henry, I was able to introduce and teach for a number of years a catch-all Folk Literature course. The course allowed me to incorporate everything from folktales and balladry to Mary Murfree and contemporary writers like James Agee and Robert Morgan. We took field trips to Whitetop Mountain to get acquainted with a remarkable traditional musician and fiddle maker, Albert Hash. At the same time we were reading a Guggenheim poet Fred Chappell. As a part of the course we might cross the mountains to Boone for an afternoon with that extraordinary scholar-storyteller-musician Cratis Williams. Or we might enjoy the gentle spirit of poet Jeff Daniel Marion visiting with us in class, dousing with us for the genuine in our poems.

N&T: Was the Folk Literature course well received?

DL: I guess you could say that both it and the Writing Poetry course have been popular. But it was the living subject matter and the doing, the engagement of the students with their "real world" that made those courses successful. Some students thought the Folk Literature course would be another adventure into the quaint world of corn shuck dollery. Others thought it would mostly engage us in another favorite cerebral pastime in Appalachia — academic strip mining. But mostly what we did was study literature and its sources in the past and present, and sometimes we got close to some of its truth.

N&T: What were your reasons for offering a course in writing poetry?

DL: Writers need an audience, and sometimes teachers can be that. Former students come back to say that they never took themselves seriously as writers until someone else did. Just yesterday I had a

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Above Dry Branch

A laconic description in the pamphlet:
"2.9 — Curved trestle over Dry Branch."
Enough to tell us
how far we are from somewhere,
that directions change, that trestles span,
and that in the olden days
those who named creeks
were likely to tell it like it was.

Hyperbole is left to others
who, coming upon this place for the first time,
want to shout Eurekas to the world
and then, on second thought, to keep it forever secret:
you round a bend on a summer morning
and suddenly the mists present a wooden bridge,
curving through the treetops
and disappearing toward some Shangri-la,
belonging to some enchanted childhood dream
beyond the sweep of this gentle parabola,
beyond this clerestory, this sanctuary,
out of time —

but belonging also, we hear, to the birds
who are nesting, they will tell you,
neither in cathedrals nor in metaphors
outside of time, but in the sycamores above Dry Branch,
and like your forebears who built this bridge,
they will tell you to get on about your business, too.

Those Who Trespass

High on a trestle of the abandoned railway,
where a lifetime ago loggers hauled treasure
through the scarred mountain landscape
and wives breathing soot and feathers and gossip
lurched their way to market, a biker
in a bullet-smooth helmet and luminous teal racing togs
streaks through the past, oblivious
to the primordial cow in the pasture below
chewing her cud in perpetuity,
forever indifferent to intruders puffing by in the sky.

Fences

Two fat and steaming Herefords have broken through
the barbed wire that separates rural work from urban play
and just when the farmhands have finessed them
to that delicate juncture where they must elect
either to turn from their startled freedom
back to their companions in the bellowing pasture
or respond to the last wild vestige of their ancestry
and like old longhorns bolt for new territory —
at that precise moment I unwittingly arrive in my car
and upset the precious and fragile equation:
the frightened heifers spook and turn awry
and charge for the open highway.

The smouldering eyes of a weary farmer speak to me
through reservoirs of resentment for strangers
who come here to run for fun, who trash his fencerows,
bumble into the way of his work, and spook his cows.
I want to say how sorry I am,
how I do understand, to tell him about my anger
when years ago on a Saturday night
a drunk plowed through my pasture fence
and how my son and I spent all of Sunday
trying to find our new bull and get him back in
and how *I know* how it feels and —

but what I really know is that I cannot close that gap,
nor may I try, for already he is loping off again
to catch his cows,
and then to mend a fence —
something I won't get done today.

History

No chronology imprinted itself
on our summer wilderness.
It did not matter that the buffalo
had preceded Walker and Boone here,
and the nameless longhunters and the Cherokee
before them, or that the silent clearings
where we found flint and arrowheads
also had roared with rebel cannon
in someone's real war.

We contrived our own chronicle
all the long day wherever the chase led:
through the vines of the falling shot tower,
belly down in broomsage listening for drums,
beneath the chinquapins and oaks
where we found the dead
in remnants of stirrup and saddle,
or in the cold wet echoes of Cudjo in the dark cave.

Climbing the worn grey cliffs
we found our own handholds in time,
already schooled in all that mattered
before September's bell told us otherwise.

A Collection of Poems by Dan Leidig

Passage

Elevated above the world
on an old cookstove
that rusts in the barnyard
I am made ready for Sunday:
my father is cutting my hair.
The pink-eyed goat watches,
shaking his own truant bangs,
and the crumpled cow
grinds her horizontal cud
in rhythm to ancient shears
that press contrition
upon my stiff young neck.
I cannot hold still
despite my father's caution:
What will the boys and girls say
if we don't get it right?
Hold still.

Finally, shorn and almost shriven,
I am pronounced ready at last.
I turn from the animals,
my own forelock gone. My vision blurs.
Behind me an old rooster
flies up to his perch
to proclaim a passage in time.

Markings

Traveling to Watauga for the daily walk
we grow familiar with new country.
The windshield pans around curves
and over rises, pushing back edges.
We have begun to nod to recurrent strangers:
the grim man who paces in front of the trailers,
the woman taking the *Herald-Courier* from the box,
the couple rushing their separate ways to work —
just like our neighbors, we say;
we are beginning to feel at home.
We learn secrets hidden in fogs
that flow up between the Knobs
and across pastures, swallowing the cattle
and erasing their barns and opening fences
in a wash of capricious freedom. This morning
in a cow lot in the midst of the Holsteins
we see a white kitten with black markings
in all the right places and we name her
Heifer, wondering whose whimsy
picked this one from the litter for this place,
wishing we were bold enough to stop
and thank somebody for their little simile,
this soft amusement between us strangers,
for a moment, like neighbors.

Contrary Motions

When you lay down on the wooden bridge
and stared at the water and willed it
the stream would begin to transport you backward

and in the twisting swing beneath the apple tree
you found that you could compel
the whirling backyard into drunkenness

and with an impious cross of the eyes
you could blur your mother into multiple images
even as she warned about lifelong disfigurement

and in due course you found that love
was a willing conjunction of contrary motions
and you knew it could move the earth.

But somewhere almost imperceptibly
you stopped imposing your will on the world
and began asking the motions to stop:

once on board a troopship still at anchor
in the night you felt yourself begin to move
implacably toward a distant unknown shore;

years later you sat on a train in a foreign station
clinging to your own unmoving reflection,
resisting the force of an unscheduled departure;

and still later you simply stood up one day
to find the vertiginous planets realigning themselves,
insisting that it was all a temporary dislocation.

And now you are remembering your father's pale fists
clenching the bedsheet, trying to wring a pause
from the inexorable motions of his heart.

Appalachian Wr

Now and Then asked some of our favo

Nikki Giovanni

is the author of several books including *Black Feeling, Black Talk,* 1967; *Ego Tripping & Other Poems for Young People,* 1974; and *Sacred Cows ....& Other Edibles,* 1988. She was born in Knoxville, Tenn., spent her childhood summers there and now lives in Christiansburg, Va.

Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-1963 by Taylor Branch, Simon & Schuster, 1988.

"A study of the Civil Rights movement before and through Martin Luther King, Jr. The most comprehensive book to date. No home should be without it. Good writing. Excellent insights."

The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier by Amy Wilentz, Simon & Schuster, 1989.

"Great book, a journalistic view. Haiti was the first republic in this hemisphere. Watching how it was undone by bigger powers and venal people gives a good insight to its current problems."

Mama Day by Gloria Naylor, Ticknor & Fields, 1988.

"A wonderful tale of a magical woman who could as easily reside in the hollers as her home town of Willow Creek. My very favorite novel by Naylor and one of my all-time favorites. I've read it three times and will do so again. The story is wonderful, the language rich. An all-around treat.

John Bowers

is the author of many articles and books including his acclaimed *Stonewall Jackson: Portrait of a Soldier,* 1989 and his meditation on the night, *In the Land of Nyx,* 1985. A Johnson City, Tenn., native, now residing in New York, he says about his reading: "I'm all over the place — one book on the subway, another at breakfast, one in the evening, one to mercifully keep me away from alleged work, etc. I tend not to read overly about the South because I figure I know enough about it as is. I do read C. Vann Woodward at the least chance and consider him one of the few saints extant."

The Education of Henry Adams, an autobiography, Houghton Mifflin, 1961, originally published in 1918.

"Very insightful on America and England. Adams was a marvelous stylist as well as an acute observer. Loved his *History of the Jefferson Administration*, too. (*Histories of the United States of America During the Administrations of Jefferson & Madison*, Riverside Edition Series, 1989, reproduction of 1885 edition).

W. J. Cash: A Life by Bruce Clayton, Louisiana State University Press, 1991.

"Cash understood the South and marvelously dissected it in *The Mind of the South* (1941). This biography is a thorough, scholarly study of someone who was one of us. A tragic story in many ways. Cash's life ended in suicide in Mexico."

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath, Bantam, 1988, originally published in England in 1963, in the U.S. in 1971.

"Just got around to reading this marvelous book of a 1950s woman's descent into madness. I was expecting a feminist tract and had put off reading it for some time. Read *Rough Magic,* a biography of Plath, and then this book. *Bell Jar* is powerful — funny, sad and tragic.

"I'm also reading James' *Portrait of a Lady, Sherman's March* by Richard Wheeler, and *What's This Cat Story?* by Seymour Krim. It seems all I'm doing is reading. When do I start living?"

Fred Chappell

is the author of many poetry books including *Bloodfire,* 1978; *Wind Mountain,* 1979; *Midquest,* 1981; and *Source,* 1985. His novels include *I Am One of You Forever,* 1987, and *Brighten the Corner Where You Are,* 1989. *The Fred Chappell Reader,* 1987, is an anthology of his work. He comes from western North Carolina which provides the setting for much of his work, and he teaches at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Playing for Keeps, poetry by Donald Junkins, Lynx House, 1991.

"Good stuff."

Green River, poetry by Robert Morgan, Wesleyan, 1991.

"Mighty good stuff."

Entered from the Sun, by George Garrett, Doubleday, 1990.

"Novel about the death of Cristopher Marlowe. Entrancing."

Jim Wayne Miller

is the author of many books of poetry including *Brier, His Book,* 1988; *The Mountains Have Come Closer,* 1980; *Vein of Words,* 1984; and *Nostalgia for 70,* 1986. His fiction includes *His First, Best Country,* 1987; and *Newfound,* 1989. A native of western North Carolina, he now teaches at Western Kentucky University and is the poet laureate of Kentucky.

A Red Shadow of Steel Mills, photos and poems edited by David Shevin and Larry Smith, Bottom Dog Press, c/o Firelands College, Huron, Ohio 44893, 1991.

"I agree with co-editor Larry Smith who says that the work of these Ohio poets — Timothy Russell, David J. Adams, Kip Knott and Richard Hague — is 'part of a long and strong tradition in American poetry that has grown out of the working class life' and that these poets are 'four night-

riters . . . Read

rite writers what they've been reading

hawks in the millyard.' The photos by Steve Cagan and Martin Juredine and Dennis Horan are as fine as those of Walker Evans in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. The poets deal with the industrial world that hundreds of thousands of Southern Appalachian migrants — Briers — have experienced throughout much of the 20th century. There's no attempt on the part of these poets and photographers to grow nostalgic about the rust belt, or to falsely glorify the life they are familiar with. Rather, they are imagining experience that is often left out of accounts of American life."

There's little sex, less death, and a whole lot of fly-fishing here.

Our Mountain as told by Jimmy and Corey Allder to Ellen Harvey Showell, illustrated by Nancy Carpenter, Bradbury Press, 1991.

"Showell listened to her nephews tell about their life in Auto, W. Va., and instead of writing *about* these boys, decided to let them tell their own story, which puts me in mind of Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* or *Huck Finn*. Not since I read *I Thunk Me a Thaut*, the delightful journal of a turn-of-the century Southern Appalachian boy, Will McCall (published by Teacher's College Press, Columbia University, in the mid-1970s), have I read anything as fresh and authentic as this little book. Showell has hit on a splendid idea: letting kids everywhere tell about their families, neighborhoods, communities — places on or off the map where people live."

Somerset Homecoming: Discovering a Lost Heritage by Dorothy Spruill Redford with an introduction by Alex Haley, Anchor Doubleday Books, 1988.

"Dorothy Spruill Redford got interested in tracing her ancestry, and as a result of years of research in county courthouses in eastern North Carolina, she made some astonishing discoveries. She was able to trace her family to one plantation. This is an outstanding example of oral history. Redford makes the otherwise so distant past seem what it actually is: very much with us.

Sex, Death, & Fly-Fishing by John Gierach, Simon & Schuster, 1990.

"For some people, the title of this book covers just about everything of importance. Actually, the title is a trendy one (cf. the film, *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*). There's little sex, less death, and a whole lot of fly-fishing here. Gierach writes well, taking the reader from his quiet home water (an ordinary, run-of-the-mill trout stream where fly-fishing is a routine matter, the St. Vrain River in Colorado) to Utah's famous Green River and to unknown creeks throughout the Western states and Canada. One is introduced to a lively group of fishing buddies, some local 'experts' and an ex-girlfriend along the way."

Porch Talk With Ernest Gaines: Conversations on the Writer's Craft edited by Marcia Gaudet and Carl Wooton, Louisiana State University Press, 1990.

"This is a collection of interviews conducted by the editors on the porch of Gaines's home in Lafayette, La., where he is writer-in-residence at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. The author of several works of fiction, Gaines is best known for *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. Gaines talks about oral tradition and literature; family and culture; folklore and ethnicity; turning fiction into film and lots more.

Listening for the Crack of Dawn by Donald Davis, August House, 1990.

"In 14 stories about trying to grow up in western North Carolina during the 1950s and 1960s, Davis chronicles his life in Sulpher (sic!) Springs, N. C., from first grade through high school graduation and a classmate's departure for Vietnam. The stories are by turns gently humorous, wise, witty, with an occasional outbreak of mayhem equal to George Washington Harris's Sut Lovingood Tales. "The Last Butler in Sulpher Springs" and "A Different Drummer," about the classmate who goes to Vietnam, are poignant, stand-out stories. Davis performs full time as a professional storyteller in the tradition of John Henry Faulk, Jerry Clower and the late Grady Nutt. Davis has connected this set of stories in such a way as to create a place — Sulpher Springs — as memorable as Jesse Stuart's W-Hollow, Ky., or Garrison Keillor's Lake Woebegon, Minn."

Rotten Reviews edited by Bill Henderson, Penguin Books, 1987.

"A collection of 175 nasty attacks on some now-classic authors and books. This little book is dedicated to "Walt Whitman, who may have written some of his best reviews himself," which is probably true. To any writer it might be a consolation to know that a reviewer of *Huck Finn* in 1884 called the book 'a gross trifling with every fine feeling,' and that a reviewer of *The Scarlet Letter* saw it as evidence of 'a running undertide of filth.'"

Jo Carson

Reading for *The Bear Facts*

When we asked playwright and poet — and ***Now and Then*** *poetry editor — Jo Carson to contribute to the section on what regional writers are reading, her thoughts turned to the research she's been doing for a play. She wrote this essay tracing the winding trails that her research has taken her, and she also gave us an excerpt from the play that is emerging from all her readings. What follows is a story of the progression from reality to art, from the bare facts to the bear facts, if you will.*

Archives of Appalachia

What have I read lately? Geez-o-whiskers. I'm up to my ears in Davy Crockett. I've been interested in Crockett for a long time because he is a man who set out to create a legend of himself in his own lifetime, and, to a degree, he succeeded. I knew I wanted to work with that. I set out to write a play.

But it started with Joseph Campbell. I don't get PBS very well on my TV — I don't have cable — and when the Bill Moyers interviews with Joseph Campbell were on, I started reading the man's work. My Crockett notebook has a tremendous amount from Joseph Campbell copied into it. The books I read and reread were *Myths to Live By* (Bantam, 1984), *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, 1990), and from The Masks of God series, *Primitive Mythology* and *Creative Mythology* (first published in the 1970s, reprinted 1991, Viking Penguin).

And then, there's all the Crockett stuff to read: books he wrote or wrote with somebody under his name; stuff that was written under Crockett's name that he had nothing to do with, some of it even after his death; the plays written out of the Crockett legend. Also in this category are the John Wayne film and the Walt Disney version of Davy Crockett; and then there's all the stuff written about Crockett and the legend he managed to make of himself. I'd recommend by Crockett, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee* (frequently reprinted by several publishers including the University of Tennessee Press). For some truly racist, ugly pieces of Americana that passed for comedy at the time, read *The Crockett Almanacs* that were published mostly after Crockett's death but in his name (beginning in 1835 and coming out annually for more than 20 years). James Paulding's play, *The Lion of the West,* which opened in 1831, is an amusement. Any of Michael Lofaro's work as a writer and editor on the subject of Crockett covers this stuff and more. I recommend a book he edited, *Davy Crockett: The Man, the Legend, the Legacy, 1786-1986* (University of Tennessee Press, 1985).

And because Andrew Jackson was such a player in Crockett's story, I began reading Jackson material. The Jackson presidency changed this country. Some of the history writing is pretty dry, but there is a three-volume biography of Jackson by Robert V. Remini and an excellent 400-page condensation of it called *Life of Andrew Jackson* (Harper Collins, 1988, and Viking Penguin, 1990) by the same author. I read the whole of the smaller and the relevant parts of the larger and recommend either.

The Removal in 1838 was a product of the Jackson presidency, and Congressman Crockett had voted against it. So I picked up Cherokee history. An astounding book is John Ehle's *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (Doubleday, 1988).

And because it was a time of slavery, I read some of that history, too. I found slave narratives which are frightening for what they do say but even more frightening for what they don't say. A collection called *Six Women's Slave Narratives* (Oxford University Press, 1988) is a taste of the work. And because some wealthy Cherokees held slaves, I read that history, too. Theda Perdue's book, *Slavery and*

Continued on page 24 ➤

From *The Bear Facts*

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How to Hunt Bears

from Act One

a monologue spoken by the character Davy Crockett

There is folks hauls 'em out of their dens during their winter sleep and shoots 'em, but in my view, that ain't sporting. Maybe if you're starving. But there's lots of other critters taste better than bears out during the winter and starving themselves, so I don't see no sense to it. Truth is, a man has fresh bear meat on his table in the dead of winter, I'd call that man a flop-eared coward. Might wait till I'd finished the dinner, especially if I was hungry.

One way to get bears is to be lame or tired or not paying attention, or better, be half dead with fevers or the drizzling shits, and that's when a bear will find you. It ain't the easy way to hunt bear, but it is a sure way. You best notice the bear at a distance and shoot it or else you'll have to fight it, and the only way I know of to fight a bear is to bite it where it hurts, and the only place I've ever been willing to try biting on a bear is its nose, and it is best to bite it hard enough that if the bear leaves, you still have the nose. From this position, you can stab the bear or strangle it, your choice. It is best not to spend too long making the decision. Some folks will tell you to try one, and if that don't work, try the other. I say choose one and hang on because trying to change techniques in the middle of a bear fight is distracting. Some folks, usually the same folks talked about trying one then trying the other, say if you are losing, to play 'possum. Myself, I've never been in that position, but it sounds to me like good advice to give your worst enemy. I'll tell you this: don't ever run from a bear unless you can run up a tree that is too small for the bear to run up right after you.

Then there's the whining in of bears. This ain't the sort of thing you try the first time when you're hungry. Whining in anything is an art and a science. With a bear, the science part is picking a likely spot, which means a place where bears can hear you but can't see you or smell you, which means you're upwind from the bear or covered with fox pee, one or the other, and the art part is sitting there sounding word for word like a fat baby whitetail that's lost its mama, can't see behind it and got a leg wedged in between two rocks. Dinner bell for a bear.

There's hunting with dogs. There ain't no more fun in this world than hearing good dogs sing on a hot trail and heading out to follow the pack. The problem is the dogs. There's bear dogs, fox dogs, coon dogs, cat dogs, squirrel dogs, bird dogs, rabbit runners, 'possum hounds, ratters, stump puppies and biscuit eaters. Shoot the stump puppies and biscuit eaters; let the 'possum hounds and ratters run loose around the house, and keep one or two each of the others, and don't hunt with a man don't know his dogs, or there ain't no telling what's going to get treed. Been known to run more than one man through to the end of his good humor.

Bait. Best bear bait in the world is a woman on the rag. It ain't the woman, it is the blood. It's wise blood; regular blood don't work, but there ain't a bear in the world that don't like wise blood. I tell you, they want to sleep in it. Next best bait is fresh cow meat, but seems to me, if you're going to slaughter a cow, you might as well eat it and not worry about the bear.

You can burn honey in the wind, that calls 'em in. There is still the problem of the bear smelling you. The solution is more fox pee, which ain't perfume, take my word for it, not to mention the problems of collecting it. Squeezing the pee out of foxes is a morning's work for a strong man all by itself.

Or, you can stand in the woods and announce you are David Crockett, the yellow flower of the forest, and you are not going home without a bear and see who volunteers.

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The Bear

from Act One

a monologue spoken by the character The Bear

The bear is a mammal having a shaggy coat, a short tail, and walking with the entire lower surface of its feet touching the ground, bearing weight.

I am. … Bear with me.

There are, by order of size, black bears, grizzly bears, polar bears and brown bears. Black bears are smallest. A large black bear is 600 pounds, a large brown bear is an overbearing 1000 pounds. Grizzlies are noted for being surly, polar bears for being smart, brown bears for eating fish. (They are pigs.) Black bears are shy.

I am a black bear. I am.

In good years, years with lots of food, I can bring to bear 300 pounds. The sleep of good years is rich and wondrous. In bad years, I am bare bone, and I bear a heavy heart. The sleep of those years is hardly bearable. The bear necessities are food, water, territory — a bare minimum of twenty miles — and a place to den up so we can bear up when there is no food for us. Bears sleep. I do. I bear my children in my sleep. They are bare when they are born, no bigger than squirrels and they suckle and bear fur while I dream. And, bear witness, I dream.

I dream of revenge.

If my predator, Mr. Crockett, were here, we might have had a debate. If he were here, I could have made a hole in his side too.

— Jo Carson

(continued from page 22)

the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866 (University of Tennessee Press, 1979), addresses the particulars.

Robert Penn Warren wrote a book called *Brother to Dragons* (Random, 1953, revised edition, 1979), which is from a true story out of the Jackson family about the murder of a slave. I read and recommend that and found in it an account, among other things, of the New Madrid earthquakes. I asked my research associate (a good friend at the East Tennessee State University Library who doesn't mind chasing down odd stuff) what she had on that and found myself in a weeks-long divergence into accounts of the biggest earthquake this country has ever known. James Penick, Jr.'s, *The New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811-1812* (University of Missouri, 1981, revised edition) is an education on the subject.

Tecumseh is supposed to have predicted the earthquake, so I read Tecumseh's history. In this research I was directed to a book called *The Frontiersmen* by Allan W. Eckert (Bantam, 1984). It is the history of white encroachment on Indian lands in Kentucky and Ohio and of Tecumseh's rise to power. Tecumseh is astounding, a prophet, a statesman and a military mastermind.

Out of the earthquake stuff (and other reading) came a theme of the play I'm writing: everything in it, including the earth is a shape changer. So began another divergence, into shamanistic writings and the idea of a shape changer. No single book was of particular service — Joseph Campbell was helpful again — but if you are interested, start reading out of the idea of the wounded healer. It will take you lots of places including the Sioux Chief Black Elk's *Black Elk Speaks* (by John G. Neihardt, University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

The New Madrid earthquakes created in Southeast Arkansas and West Tennessee some incredibly rough country, almost impenetrable, which in turn created a refuge for game. This was part of what drew Crockett to the place. Crockett was a hunter. His specialty was bears, and I needed to learn something about how to hunt them. So began a long foray into the literature of hunting bears. Previously, I had read Faulkner's *The Bear* and Thomas B. Thorpe's *The Big Bear of Arkansas* (first published in 1841 and widely anthologized) but not much else. If you want to follow bear hunting, they are a good place to start, but they are only a beginning. There are how-to books, lots of them, magazines, forests of them, and I started in. Clyde Ormond's *Bear!* (Stackpole, 1961) has an armchair slant to it. Bob McGuire's *Black Bears, a Technical and Hunting Guidebook* (Bow Hunting Productions, 1983) is precisely what the title says.

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I bear witness; I have never had mystery arrive in flesh and blood before, and I have never been so honored.

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I also read old accounts of hunting bears. Early on in the white move over the mountains, this territory was full of them. Often hunters had to shoot the bear twice and load the gun with shot and powder again in between the shots with a very angry bear very close by. In that moment come the stories: a man clinging to a skinny tree (too small for the bear to climb) for days at a time, or a man trying to stand still enough that the bear doesn't see him. That only works if he is downwind from the bear. Bears smell very well. They don't see so well. The loss of body parts to bears. The biting off of a bear's nose. There is a collection called *The Bear Hunter's Century: Profiles from the Golden Age of Bear Hunting* by Paul Schulberg (Stackpole, 1989).

I too was hunting bears. I knew by this time that, not only was Crockett a hunter of bears, but the play I was writing had a bear in it. So it was back to Joseph Campbell on the worship of bears and the bear caves, and then to Jung on archetypes and back to Cherokee mythology. The Cherokees have a story (I found it in anthropologist James Mooney's work, *Myths of the Cherokee*, Scholarly Press, 1970, reprint of 1900 edition) that says bears were originally another family of the Nation, and they forgot to avenge the death of their loved ones so they turned into bears. The implication is they turned into something other but not far removed.

I was in the middle of all this bear stuff when the bear that came through Johnson City in the summer of 1990 looked in my back door. I bear witness; I have never had mystery arrive in flesh and blood before, and I have never been so honored. Synchronicity is funny stuff in this world. The moral of this part of the story is, be careful what you read and think about; you might get a visit.

The play I am writing is called *The Bear Facts*. As I write this in December 1991, it has had a two-week workshop at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. It goes to a reading at Southeast Playwrights in Atlanta in January and a second workshop in New York at Women's Project in February. By then I hope it will be done, finished by me, ready for its own life, and I can get on to the next play (and some fiction).

In the meantime, current reading is everything I can find about synchronicity. Let me recommend one more book: *Synchronicity: Science, Myth, and the Trickster* by Allan Combs and Mark Holland (Paragon House, 1990).

Dad

More deaf at each
family gathering,
he repeats his stories
as if we haven't heard;
but he keeps active
balancing the books
for the daycare center
and lunching with
other retirees.
He gardens and empties
attic and basement,
bringing us boxes
of squash and broken tools
to pick through.
I am like him,
saving precious words
for the womenfolk.

—Frederick Wilbur

Grohnirs' Corner on a Saturday Night

In Grohnirs' Corner
On a Saturday night
Old Manley said he thought
He'd just "go ahead
And die and
Make it a full week."
Mrs. Manley, dressing
A chicken in the kitchen,
Said, "Well, of course,
Where you go —
That's left up to you.
But I've got to read
My Sunday school lesson
Before I can even go to bed."

—Walt Haden

After Hoeing the Bottom Planted in Corn

Granmaw could wash in a porcelain basin
on the back porch
every portion of her body
by reaching inside her buttoned and zippered dress
with washrag and soap
rinse
never once revealing any part of her ivory skin.
Finished
flesh clean and cornstarch dusted
she'd make second work of basin water
to flat rock walk
and taking no rest in between
she'd rinse the basin, place potatoes for peeling.
Supper due, never late, her strong hands tied
a gentle bow — clean apron over same dress —
while her eyes searched the field
for familiar hunger coming home.

—Deborah Hale Spears

the dead

his name was miller
he worked in the place
where his family had ground their neighbors' corn
for generations:

built to serve colonists,
a solid, triple-chambered house
of true proportions
hewn from virgin oak, hickory, heart pine,
as steady as the law of gravity and stone,
as steady as the people's need for bread

homely, proportioned at the fifth remove
from prime (neither tall
nor stout), this miller talked
too much, spewed rank tales
at strangers, wore a strawberry nose

led us down past giant wooden gears
beside the water noise behind the wall and out
to a small courtyard
bounded by one manmade and one natural stream
to a massive round wood tub

the english county council chairman
and his high-heeled wife with her purse and i
peered in

as the partial eclipse
netted noon back
we saw mythic sisters of the sun
alive
and naked in the liquid dark

swimming yellow, blue, citrine, rose — each
big trout like that horse from oz
of another color
"they'll sport like that," he
said "it's not uncommon"

upstairs, you could come in
when the mill was empty, stroll
among dusty spears of light,
take the meal you wanted
from the sacks divided
into yellow and white, each sealed
with string
leave your dollar
in the saucer

once i brought my father
and his bride

—Suzanna O'Donnell

Suzanna O'Donnell is working on a book about the landfill wars in Lee County, Va.

Fredrick Wilbur has had poetry published in a number of journals in the mid-south and works as a wood carver and an instructor in creative writing at Piedmaont Virginia Community College.

Walt Haden teaches in the English Department at the University of Tennessee at Martin.

D. H. Spears is working on her fourth collection of poetry and her first collection of folktales from Floyd and Johnson counties, in Kentucky, where her family roots are still strong.

Appalachian

Last fall I taught a course in American autobiography at East Tennessee State University. It involved a literary study of significant American autobiographies, mainly 20th century, and the writing of each student's own autobiography.

Participants read their installments to the class as audience and source of commentary, as in a creative writing workshop. But because of this "public" premise, it was emphasized that the writers needed to discuss only what they wanted to; furthermore, that it was consistent with autobiographical aesthetics for the writer to embroider the truth, or, if necessary, lie, to achieve the desired effect on the listeners/readers.

One of the goals in creating this patchwork quilt of life histories was to reveal the extent of diversity in current, mainly younger Appalachians, and what, if any, common grounds these histories would reveal. In fact, one common ground of the literary autobiographies of Americans we studied in class—by Kate Simon, Richard Wright, Maxine Hong Kingston and others—was how many of them were shaped by the unmelted ethnicity of the authors.

What follows is one long excerpt and a few short ones from some of the remarkable work that came out of this class.

—Fred Waage

Kathryn Ann Cornett

I idolized my father for years. To me he looked like Elvis Presley. This was a pretty good compliment at that time, for Elvis was very popular. Daddy was over six feet tall and had dark hair and eyes. Beautiful teeth. All the women adored him. I found out at an early age just how much and how many women adored him. He reciprocated their attention. Openly.

My father worked on the Great Lakes as a merchant marine for the Hannah Mining Company. He came home usually in August and again sometime around Christmas. When I was little, I looked forward to the August visit especially because it meant we would get out of school on some days to do the things Daddy liked—hunting, fishing and riding through the mountains.

The times we got to go to the airport were like magical trips to another world for me. We lived in such a tiny town that the drive to the Tri-Cities airport was like a cross-country trip to me. My mother always dressed us up as though we were going to be in a pageant.

I always thought Daddy was gorgeous when I saw him step down from his plane. Smiling, waving, carrying some little airport shop gift for us, I loved him as much as any young girl could love a father. When he got to us, he would hug and kiss my sister and me. Then he would kiss my mother. Sandy and I would roll our eyes and look at them in total disgust. It was one thing to kiss your little girls, but to kiss our mother in public! Ugh!

On the way home we would be so excited listening to what happened to him on the plane and at work for the past few months.

That's how it was at first, seen through the eyes of a child infatuated with the gorgeous stranger who was her father. Later, as I grew old enough to comprehend the stress, not to mention danger, that his coming home brought into the lives of my mother, sister and myself, Daddy's big arrival became a most dreaded event.

When I was old enough, I realized there was a pattern in Daddy's homecoming. After he had been home no more than two weeks, sometimes much sooner, he would begin drinking beer, then wine, then bourbon and vodka. He would be Mr. Dad for awhile, happy and relaxed, and then one day he would get up and dress up a bit more than usual, and he would be gone until late in the evening. By the time he came back, the tension in the house hung like a thick black cloud of smoke. My sister and I learned the routine at an early age. Don't talk. Don't play. Don't fight. Be good. Go to bed. Hope the phone doesn't ring. And above all, pray that Daddy doesn't get mad.

My sister and I spent nights, years of nights, in the same bed, with hearts pounding, whispering and wondering what the night would bring.

Sometimes Daddy's temper exploded so quickly we didn't have time to prepare or brace ourselves. Sometimes he just mumbled and stumbled around and crashed into furniture for awhile and then went to sleep.

A lot of times he didn't. Many nights, from the time I was old enough to remember until I was 16, Daddy would get to a certain dangerous point of drunkenness, and we knew to be ready to run for our lives. Literally.

Daddy exploded and threatened to kill us all for forgetting to feed the dog, for not wanting a milk shake, for me refusing, when I finally got brave enough to, to go on a hunting adventure with him because he was getting drunk. Once, when I was 15, because I was a half an hour late coming home from a movie. Once because I lied about a boy. Once because my mom made spaghetti for supper. The list goes on and on.

Throughout all this, at least until I was 12 or 14, I still idolized him. Looking back, I don't see why. After a certain age, though, I just wanted to be rid of him and his reign of terror. I'm sure I still loved him, but when you're a teenager and you truly believe your own father will kill you and the rest of your family, love gets pushed aside and turns coldly to resentment and anger.

The last time Daddy came home, no one went to the airport. In fact, I think my sister and I had stopped going two or three years before. The big event was no longer looked forward to with joy or excitement. Instead we dreaded his coming home and spent a lot of time ferreting out places in which to hide when Daddy had his next inevitable violent display.

We had to leave home many times in the

Autobiography

middle of the night, still wearing pajamas. We missed a lot of school. We stayed in motels, sat in the woods beside our house till morning, went to our grandparents' or to my uncle's house. Once we sat all night in a hospital parking lot because we couldn't find a motel that was open. It really was a nightmarish existence.

The last time was in 1975. When Daddy came home, he drove instead of flying. There had been some kind of trouble on the ship, alcohol related, and we later learned he had either lost or was in danger of losing his job. He was drunk and angry when he came home in January. He was angry and depressed when he killed himself in March.

The trips to the airport were over. The running and hiding from him were over. Sad as I was at the loss of my father, it was a relief. For many years I felt guilty about feeling relieved. But all my memories of Daddy are not bad ones. Whenever I want to think kindly of him, instead of thinking of the angry, depressed 42-year-old man in 1975, I remember him as my Daddy. White teeth flashing in the sunlight as he waved to us coming out of the plane. I remember his big warm hugs. And sometimes, even now, almost 17 years later, I miss the Daddy he was, or at least I thought he was, when I was very young.

Vanessa Bowen

I cannot remember the first time I went to church, and I cannot remember a time in my younger years that I was not in church every Sunday. The church was Mountain View Primitive Baptist Church. My earliest memory of church is of sleeping on the hard wooden benches which vibrated with every word of the preacher. I cannot describe to you what attending church was like, and I cannot tell you exactly what my beliefs are, but I will say that I am a God-fearing person who believes in heaven and hell and who believes in an all-loving, all-powerful and omniscient God. I believe also that I came from dust and will return to such when I die and that my ancestors were not apes, but human like myself.

Jan Seals

We lived on a small farm. To get there you circle around the Winchester courthouse, take the road off the square — which will put Hammer's Bargain Basement on the left — and drive for three and three-eighths miles. Pass Bishop's Body Shop, where from age 10 to 12 I was responsible for three preschoolers every Saturday, and pass the turnoff to Little Mountain Church, where I was held captive every Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night until I moved away from home.

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In high school I chose college prep courses, intending to attend Middle Tennessee State University with my closest friends. My father, however, said that he would only pay for my college education if I attended a Christian college like David Libscomb. He didn't want me to become an atheist as he thought my sister had when she attended East Tennessee State University. Not wanting to become a Bible-carrying religious fanatic, I politely refused his offer.

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It may have been that I was, finally, in my early 20s, going through the rebellious phase most people encounter in their teens. Eddy was certainly not approved of by my Dad at first. With long hair, a full beard and ragged clothes, Eddy reminded Daddy of the flower children hippy types my sister had brought home from college. It didn't matter, for instance, that one of Kay's boyfriends could play and sing the entire 18-minute version of "Alice's Restaurant," he was still no good to Daddy.

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My decision to enter ETSU, in all honesty, was not *my* decision. With the rock-bottom self-esteem that a divorce usually brings, I was not capable of making a rational decision about what to order at Wendy's. But pushed and cajoled by my family, I agreed to try college.

"My sister and I spent nights, years of nights, in the same bed, with hearts pounding, whispering and wondering what the night would bring."

Senior English major Kathryn Cornett lives in Mountain City, Tenn., with her two sons. She plans to teach.

Vanessa Bowen grew up in Lee County in Stickleyville, in Southwest Virginia.

English major Jan Seals moved to East Tennessee from middle Tennessee with her son in 1987.

Nonnie & the Big Talker

(Continued from page 6)

instantly from gray to silver brilliance, to diamonds spread out sparkling before their eyes. Ezekiel squeezed her hand, *Hit looks like Heaven, don't it?* he said, and then the preacher took her, and then she was under, frozen solid and dead, and then she was up sputtering and resurrected, and as soon as it was done, the choking dream stopped forever.

Now Nonnie could go on about her life, her good life as it came to pass, for she grew accustomed to Ezekiel's limitations and learned to compensate for them, handling all the money for instance, doing the things Ezekiel was not cut out to do, while he did the things he could. Under his hands, the farm prospered. Hired girls came in to help Nonnie with the work as time went on and more children were born, Pack Bailey in 1886, and little Elizabeth, called Lizzie, in 1890.

These were the blurred and busy years, the good years, when Nonnie got so caught up in the great tumble and roar of her life that she never even thought of the rose silk dress folded away in the loft, nor of Jake Toney, nor of how she used to dance up on the counter of the store in Cana when she was a little girl and sing the cuckoo song.

Oh Nonnie still sang while she carded the wool or rocked the baby or shelled the beans, but now she mostly sang the hymns that Ezekiel loved, or the old bloody ballads like Barbry Allen or Brown Girl or the Gypsy Rover. It gave Nonnie the strangest feeling to sing that one:

> Oh I could leave my house and land
> And I could leave my baby
> And I could leave my own liege lord
> And live with the Gypsy Rover.

For how could a woman do such as that? Men might wander, but women were meant to stay home, and during those years when the house on Mossy Branch was brimming over with babies, Nonnie could not imagine anywhere else she might even *want* to be, whirled around as she was in the great spinning wheel of the seasons, as implacable as the stars *plant now pull the fodder now hoe the corn now dig the new ground the baby is crying she wants to be fed the cow is lost Mamma my throat hurts Mamma whar is the hairbrush Mamma he hurt me it is time to buy the seed corn Mamma he it is time to Mamma it is time mamma mamma mamma.*

Ezekiel loved the children and played with them by the hour, rolling down the hill behind the house with them, making cats cradles with string and chains with daisies, singing to them swinging them chucking them under their chins tickling them *Tickle tickle on your knee, if you laugh you don't love me* which made Lizzie fat little yellow-haired Lizzie, dissolve in laughter every time.

Once when Ezekiel and the boys were wrestling on the floor at her feet while she mended their clothes, Ezekiel grabbed Nonnie's leg, as shapely as ever, and said *Tickle tickle on your knee, if you laugh you don't love me* and all the children giggled expectantly, but Nonnie looked at him and did not laugh as sudden anger, like a bolt of lightning and just as unexpected, cut through her body like a knife.

Ezekiel Bailey, she said, *You ought to get up from there,* for she wanted a man suddenly, and not another child on the floor. And as Nonnie looked down at them all in a rolling heap, it hit her that she did not want to be everybody's mama, which she was. Suddenly Nonnie was in a temper, the way she used to get. She was still pretty, she was still young, she was furious. But when Zeke tickled her knee again she managed to laugh, even though it was not real laughter, not like back when she was a silly girl and everything was funny.

Was this the moment that marked the change, that signaled what the rest of her life with Ezekiel would be like? Or was there ever such a moment, or only a slow slipping away, a long estrangement so gradual that in the later years of the marriage Nonnie could not even remember what it used to be like in those busy, busy years. . . . Had Zeke *ever* talked more? It seemed so, but maybe it was just that the children made so much noise and how Nonnie loved to chatter along with them! At 17, R.C. had left home to work at a lumber camp near Holly Grove, and then Durwood got on at the sawmill. Only Pack and Lizzie were still at home, but Pack, 15, was mostly gone already, and Lizzie, at 10, lived for school and had already announced her intentions of going on to the Methodist School in Cana, once Mrs. Black had taught her everything she knew. Dimly, Nonnie remembered being a smart girl herself. But she couldn't remember herself as a child, not really, and now her own children were growing up before her very eyes, their childish features sharpening and stretching and changing them into people she scarcely knew.

Only Zeke remained the same, and he remained *exactly* the same, which infuriated Nonnie. She had given up her girlhood, her beauty, and for what? For children bent on leaving like thieves in the night, stealing her youth and her heart. For an old man with nothing to say.

But Nonnie was not yet an old woman when she went to the medicine show.

Lizzie talked her into it. *Oh come on Mama, everybody is going, everybody from school*, Lizzie said, arms and legs flying everywhere at once as she chased her puppy around the yard. It made Nonnie tired just to watch her.

What do you think, Zeke? she asked her husband who sat in his chair and smoked and stared down the valley.

Zeke! Nonnie said sharply, but once she got his attention, he merely asked why in the world he would want to go see something like that, and mentioned that God was against it, for it had been so preached from the pulpit Sunday past.

This made Nonnie see red. It was not like Zeke to tell her what to do or not do, it had something to do with that new preacherman that Nonnie didn't like anyway, and speaking of *him*, she could tell a thing or two about him just from the way he looked at her after church, not that she would, of course. Nonnie never told Zeke anything that would bother him, or that he wouldn't understand. But she determined then and there to go to the medicine show, claiming she

needed some things from town anyhow.

She and Lizzie set out on horseback the next afternoon for Cana, Lizzie leading. They stopped once to water the horses and once to eat their snack of dried beef and cornbread and pulled up at one of the Malone cousin's houses just as the sun went down. *You all better hurry up,* old Birdie Malone said, fixing her hat, *hit's fixing to start. Hit's starting in a minute.* Then off she went toward the courthouse square, followed by Nonnie and Lizzie as soon as they'd washed their faces and beat the road dust out of their clothes.

Even before they turned the corner into the square, Nonnie heard the fiddle, and as they pushed through the crowd toward the makeshift stage that had been set up in front of the statue, Nonnie's step grew lighter and lighter until she was almost dancing to the tune. It had been years since she'd heard that tune—*years*, for in keeping with his position as an elder in the Chicken Rise church, Ezekiel didn't hold with dancing or dance music. Nonnie didn't know how much she'd missed it until now. She dropped years with each step as they approached the elevated stage, draped in bunting, ringed by coal oil lamps.

Great torches flickered at each side of the stage, while large lurid placards promised gypsy fortune tellers and Indian dances and touted the virtues of Chief Thundercloud's Old-Fashioned Indian Vegetable Compound for Scalp Renewal and of Apache Indian Sagwa, the Blood, Liver and Stomach Renovator, and of Dr. Harry Sharp's Celebrated Nervine. Maybe Nonnie needed some of *that*. Her nerves had not been too good lately. She looked at the crowd and did not see a soul from the Chicken Rise congregation, thank goodness, for she feared she'd be churched for coming.

But it was beginning now—the Great Kickapoo Medicine Show starring the old medicine man himself, Indian Jack, privy to the secrets of the ages whispered in his ear by the famous Apache medicine man Flying Black Bear on his deathbed in mountainous Colorado. A black face nigger piano player came out wearing a tattered coat, tails, and a top hat, seated himself ceremoniously at the piano and then promptly fell off his stool, causing a huge puff of dust to blossom from the seat of his pants and a great roar of merriment to burst from the crowd. Then he started playing barrelhouse piano and a whole jug band came out and joined him, and then here came the two exotic gypsy dancers with gold scarves and tambourines, and then finally the medicine man himself, Indian Jack, a big imposing fellow wearing an Indian headdress and war paint.

As soon as the opening number was done, Indian Jack addressed the piano player. *How do you feel tonight, Sambo*? he asked.

I feels just like a dishrag, said the black face nigger, rolling his eyes.

What do you mean, you feel just like a dishrag? asked Indian Jack.

I needs to be squeezed! said Sambo, and everybody laughed.

Then one of the gypsy girls flounced across the stage and Sambo followed her, only to be hauled back by Indian Jack. *Don't you be follering no women offa here, Sambo,* Indian Jack ordered. *Don't you forget you are supposed to be working for me.*

Yessuh! Yessuh! grinned Sambo, nodding his head energetically. *But this redheaded nigger done come around here last night and sprinkled dis here peedee root and love powders all over me, dats what is inducing me to commit love.* The gypsy girl walked by again, and this time Sambo ran off after her, chased by Indian Jack, who reappeared seconds later to begin his first spiel, a speech about Chief Thunder Cloud's Old-Fashioned Indian Vegetable Compound, but he was just getting wound up good when Sambo came back out and stretched out full length on the stage and fell asleep, snoring loudly.

Indian Jack, annoyed at the interruption, went over and kicked him. *Sambo! I say Sambo!* Indian Jack yelled. *Can't you be useful as well as ornamental?* This sally was met by appreciative chuckles from the crowd as Sambo droned on, the loudest snoring imaginable. Lizzie, holding tight to Nonnie's hand, was crying from laughing so hard.

I tell you, Injun Jack said to the crowd, *That nigger ain't scared of work—he'll lay down beside the biggest kind of job and go to sleep.*

After several more jokes, Sambo jumped up to pound on the piano again, belting out a song unlike anything Nonnie had heard before

> Sittin on the ice till my feets got cold, sugarbabe, sugarbabe,
> Sittin on the ice till my feets got cold, babe, babe,
> Sittin on the ice till my feets got cold,
> Watchin dat crawdad go in his hole, sugarbabe, on honey mine.

Now that is real nigger music even if that ain't no real nigger somebody behind Nonnie said, and then everybody was clapping and Indian Jack had launched back into his talk about Chief Thunder Cloud's Old-Fashioned Indian Vegetable

Candy Wages

Dad shovels the cellar dry
following record rains,
scooping trespassing water
into a two-kid bucket brigade,
me and Paul Grove paid
a penny every five lugs
the two of us take
up the bulkhead steps,
dumping gritty water
clean out by the garden
so it won't run back
to haunt potatoes
Dad dug after I rescued
long rows of promise
from beetles worth
a penny a dozen dead.

—Glenn McKee

Glenn McKee, an Ohio native, lives in Waterville, Maine. His chapbook, ***The Man From Maple Grove****, was published in 1990.*

Compound. *Have you ever noticed, ladies and gentlemen, that there are no bald Indians? Now just think about it. The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, that the Indians of long ago, guided always by the Great Spirit, found curative herbs of immense value to the white man's civilization. When applied directly to the scalp, this powerful compound will stimulate the nerves which produce the growth of new hair roots and invigorate those yet present, instilling not only a luxurious growth of healthy lustrous hair but also a clarity of thought reflective of those high plains Indians who gather these precious little herbs. I myself, ladies and gentlemen, was once plagued by a receding hairline and a consequent loss of esteem. But after only one year of repeated applications of Chief Thunder Cloud's Old-Fashioned Vegetable Compound, only one year, mind you, I have the perfectly healthy hair of a much younger man.* Here, Indian Jack took off his huge feathered headdress and bowed low to the audience, allowing them a closer look at his full head of shiny black hair.

That feller weren't never bald, I'll warrant ye, somebody said right behind Nonnie, and Nonnie herself knew this was probably true, yet she couldn't take her eyes off Indian Jack, up there on the lamplit stage. He sure was one good-looking Indian. But mean? He looked like he might be mean. Indian Jack had a jutting nose and thick black brows which nearly met in the middle of his forehead and dark eyes that flashed in the torchlight.

Aw-right! Indian Jack yelled, holding up a jar of the miraculous compound, *Aw-right! Puts hair on your head and hair on your chest, only fifty cents for new vigor and manliness! Boys, you'll have to beat the girls off with a stick!*

Hands went up, folks surged forward.

Mama, I wanna go back to Birdie's now. I'm tired, Lizzie said, but Nonnie said, *Just a minute, honey. Just a minute, I want to hear them play just one more time.*

Daddy wouldn't like it, Lizzie said. *I didn't know what hit would be like when I said I wanted to come here,* and she started to cry, for the noise and the crowd and the Indian man had scared her.

But Nonnie tossed her head and stamped her little foot and said, *Oh, who cares what he'd like? Old stick-in-the-mud!*

Lizzie stood looking up at her mama, and opened her mouth in an O.

Go on then, Nonnie told her. *Just run on back to Birdie's and I'll be along directly. You know the way,* and Lizzie ran, not looking back.

The compound sale was followed by the Gypsy Mind Readers, then a buck dancer named Dancing Henry Hayes, then a thin, sickly-looking redheaded boy who sang *Leave the Light On for Me, Mother* in such a high sad voice that it brought a tear to every eye, and then Sambo back on the piano singing *Stackalee:*

> Gypsy tole Stack's mama
> Done tole her like a friend
> Your double-jinted baby
> Won't come to no good end.

By this time it had grown completely dark and the coal oil lamps were lit all around the edge of the stage, giving the performers a heightened, dramatic appearance. Even the familiar faces in the audience — storekeepers, townspeople that Nonnie had known by sight for years — took on a new aspect in the flickering firelight. They didn't look like themselves at all. They didn't look like anybody Nonnie had ever known. She wondered whether she looked that way to them — exotic, foreign.

And it was at this precise moment that Nonnie felt it stealing over her, that feeling from long ago, that quivering mixture of excitement and longing and dread which meant *Now. Right now. Something is going to happen.* The moment opened up, flared. And even as Nonnie waited for it, for whatever would happen next, she wondered, *Won't I ever get too old for this? Won't I ever grow up?* For when we are children, we think that grownups are different, that they know what they're doing. But no. We get older, but we are just the same, only older. We are not grown up. There is no such thing as grown up, and Nonnie sensed this as the drums rolled and Dr. Harry Sharp ascended the stage wearing a stovepipe hat and a fake black beard, looking somewhat like Abraham Lincoln and a lot more like Indian Jack. He held up a bottle of Apache Indian Sagwa, the Bowel, Liver and Stomach Renovator. *Now we don't have a cure-all, ladies and gentlemen,* Dr. Harry Sharp announced in his deep, beguiling voice. *Far from it. Our product is good for three things and three things only: the bowels, the stomach and the liver, and any diseases arising therefrom . . .*

Nonnie stared hard at Dr. Harry Sharp as he went on with his spiel. She had never heard a man talk so much in her whole life. It made her dizzy and weak in the knees, to hear him go on and on like that. *From the beginning of the practice of medicine, doctors have recognized the importance of cleansing the bowels as the first step in the treatment of every ailment. If you suffer from rheumatism, neuritis, arthritis, biliousness, constipation, acid or upset stomach, extreme nervousness, kidney trouble, or any other disorder made worse by frequently sluggish bowels, I highly recommend a dosage of Apache Indian Sagwa twice daily . . .*

Nonnie closed her eyes and swayed to the rhythm of Dr. Sharp's voice as though it were music. The wind came up a little bit. The torches blew wildly, scattering light. The crowd drew back. The thin boy came back out to sing *Letter Edged in Black* in his high piteous voice, accompanied by the old fiddler, as the wind rose steadily. People were leaving.

Then Pete the Tramp, who looked suspiciously like both Indian Jack and Dr. Harry Sharp, put a lighted cigar backwards into his mouth and did a whistling imitation of a freight train rounding a curve while the jugband played *Little Red Caboose Behind the Train.* Smoke poured out of Pete's mouth and wreathed his head while he whistled and the wind tore the bunting loose.

Looks like we're in for a shower, folks, he said when that act was done. *But it don't bother me none, I'm used to sleeping out here in the great outdoors. So if you'll bear with us, we'll go right on with the show until the great God almighty pulls the curtain down, and now for a little audience participation!*

Old Man Bart Willifong fiddled, and a boy that Nonnie had never seen before did imitation birdcalls, and then Nonnie found herself walking forward, right up to the edge of the stage. She said she'd like to sing. She was doing this and watching herself do it, both at once.

Why, yes mam! Pete the Tramp, even more handsome up close, was beaming at her.

And so Nonnie sang the song she'd sung when her daddy put her up on the counter as a little girl, all those years ago:

> The cuckoo she's a pretty bird
> She sings as she flies
> She brings us glad tidings
> And she tells us no lies
> She sucks all pretty flowers
> To make her voice clear
> And she never sings cuckoo
> Till the spring of the year

and for a minute, she *was* that little girl again, so silly and so good, as the audience clapped and cheered and Pete the Tramp led her up on stage to take a bow. Nonnie curtsied deeply, prettily, as if she'd been doing it all her life. It was amazing how natural she felt up there. Then the thunder cracked and the first big drops of rain splattered in the dirt, round as silver dollars. The wind rose. Some of the oil lamps guttered, and others turned over. *Goddamn it, Charley,* somebody said in the sudden dark. Pete the Tramp turned to Nonnie and kissed her. His mouth tasted fiery as the pit of hell itself. Nonnie stood on tiptoe on the floppy toes of his big big shoes and kissed him back.

That was Monday, or Stomach Night, at the Kickapoo Medicine Show. Tuesday morning, Nonnie and Lizzie went home. Tuesday night was Catarrh Night at the medicine show. Wednesday was Rheumatism Night, Thursday was Female Weakness Night. On Friday, the medicine show left town, and Nonnie went with it, taking nothing but her rose silk dress.

Lee Smith's latest novel, ***Fair and Tender Ladies****, was also set in the not-too-distant past in Southern Appalachia. Smith comes from Southwest Virginia and now lives in Chapel Hill, N. C. "Nonnie and the Big Talker" is an excerpt from her forthcoming novel,* ***The Devil's Dream.***

Kenneth Murray, courtesy of Archives of Appalachia, ETSU

Immersion

(a pantoum)

While my trousers cling wet and heavy as past sins,
women in hats stand on the bank and pray.
Half-bodies of men in white shirts bob on the river.
Their glazed foreheads glisten in God's own sun.

Women in hats stand on the bank and pray,
singing in disjointed chorus, "Praise Jesus. Hallelujah."
Their glazed foreheads glisten in God's own sun.
Heads fall back calling, "God in Heaven cleanse this man."

Singing in disjointed chorus, "Praise Jesus. Hallelujah."
"Wash away his iniquity and cleanse him. Hallelujah."
Heads fall back calling, "God in Heaven cleanse this man."
Icy fingers clamped over my face push me down into the depths.

"Wash away his iniquity and cleanse him. Hallelujah."
"Cleanse and sanctify, Jesus, in this holy water, God."
Icy fingers clamped over my face push me down into the depths.
They call on God and the river to wash me in the blood of the lamb,

"Cleanse and sanctify, Jesus, in this holy water, God."
Half-bodies of men in white shirts bob on the river.
They call on God and the river to wash me in the blood of the lamb,
while my trousers cling wet and heavy as past sins.

—Darnell Arnoult

Darnell Arnoult works at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. Much of her writing is inspired by memories of growing up in Henry County, Va.

Some students thought the Folk Literature course would be another adventure into the quaint world of corn shuck dollery. Others thought it would mostly engage us in another favorite cerebral pastime in Appalachia—academic strip mining.

Dan Leidig continued from page 17

call from one of those students from 25 years ago asking if I would take a look at some of her recent work. And, as often as possible, our department invited established poets into the classroom.

N&T: What has been your role in the *Iron Mountain Review*?

DL: I served as its editor for five years. It was begun at Emory & Henry in 1983. Its first editors, John Coward and Robert Denham, stated that its purpose was [*turning to check the first issue, he reads*] "to stake out our small corner of Appalachia and to provide here a fertile field for ideas and creativity … to give rise to a newer, deeper vision of life in Southern Appalachia."

What has developed has been primarily a literary journal. Most issues have been devoted to a single writer. It began with an examination of Sherwood Anderson's Appalachian sojourn and has continued in the main with examinations of contemporary writers from the region: James Still, Fred Chappell, Lee Smith, John Ehle, Michael Martin, Jim Wayne Miller, Wilma Dykeman, Robert Morgan, Mary Lee Settle and Charles Wright. One issue was devoted to the Holston River, featuring prose and poetry by Jeff Daniel Marion and the paintings of William C. Houston. Most issues have included previously unpublished work by the featured authors, together with critical assessments by scholars. Most of these contributions have emerged from a literary festival highlighting the work of the featured author in a weekend of readings, interviews and critical responses that has been sponsored annually by *Iron Mountain Review* and by the department of English at Emory & Henry.

The festival has provided a substantive experience for student writers. To hear literary critics take seriously the achievements of regional writers and to have opportunities to talk with the writers themselves give contemporary writing a face and a significance that may not attach to a printed page. Of course these encounters cannot displace the study of the literary heritage. Rather, such experiences can mightily reinforce the importance of that great body of literature. The discovery that contemporary writers, and especially Appalachian ones, are a part of an extended humanistic and imaginative quest lends fresh authority both to the tradition and to our own writing.

We believe that the *Iron Mountain Review* does some of the same things for the region. And we have been pleasantly surprised by the interest and requests for issues from across the nation. From time to time our students have assisted with the production of *Iron Mountain Review*, and, occasionally, a student's critical paper will be featured alongside those of the experts.

N&T: In articles you wrote on Appalachian writers Jeff Daniel Marion (*Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Winter 1983) and George Scarbrough (*Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Summer 1987) you allude to themes I find recurring in your assessments of Appalachian writers. You said the substance of Marion's poems was bound up in his "sense of local place, the creative force of memory, the presence of story in history, the abiding connections of family, the neighborly character of the small town, the intimacy of the small farm, the irreducible character of country things, the art in ordinary work, and 'just plain days gone by.'" And you said you found the essential traits in Scarbrough's fiction in his use of "the self as source, writing that is always profoundly and intentionally personal." How do these characterizations relate to your interests in teaching about the connections between the literary canon and Appalachian literature?

DL: As William Stafford has said, all experience is local, somewhere. Student readers can discover in the "local themes" of regional writers parallels to such motifs as the Fall, the journey, homecoming and regeneration that they may have been discovering regularly in Sophocles, Shakespeare or Milton. A kind of romantic tragedy persists in so much Appalachian writing — not only in the writers you have just mentioned, but in Chappell, Ehle, Still, Miller, Smith and Gurney Norman for example — and that mode has its roots not only in a mountain biblical heritage and in cultural hard times, but in the bedrock oral traditions of folk story and song. Appalachian writers may be closer to Homer's bardic methods than we think. And to their frequent surprise, students can be shown how their own writing, especially when it is least pretentious, is full of the perennial themes. A teacher who is engaged in helping to reveal that our "originality" has connections can do something both for the student's apprehension of the heritage and for the self-esteem of beginning writers.

N&T: I remember that you practiced what you preached in the Writing Poetry class by putting some of your own poems on the block. I still prize a little chapbook in which all of us engaged in the "making" of poetry. (We wrote the poems, set the type, coaxed the old letterpress, and produced the book.) The poems you wrote then and the more recent ones you have shared with *Now and Then* seem to spring from some of those familiar sources you identify in other Appalachian writers: one's past and place.

DL: I would like to think I've linked up with those old, genuine Appalachian and universal themes. I do think that Appalachians know better than a lot of folks the truth of what Mr. Eliot kept telling us: in our beginning is our end, in our end is our beginning. Those of us who have learned to teach better than we have learned to write ought at least to help spread the word about those vital connections.

Brenda Acton Neal studied English at Emory & Henry and at ETSU, where she obtained a master's degree and now teaches part time.

Rules of Language

"Don't believe it,"
my father spit

during a skirmish
of the war of my adolescence,

"but don't make fun
of my religion."

I learned interjection
when I said "Shit,"

and my mother
punctuated the word

with her open hand
against my face.

Now I have long conversations
of gibberish

with my seventeen-month-old.
The trick is inflection.

I wonder
about his comments

by lifting the meaningless
end of my sentence.

I agree
by repeating his last

three syllables.
Then he repeats

mine and we
go on agreeing

and will go on agreeing,
until we start making sense.

—Michael Chitwood

Michael Chitwood's chapbook, ***Martyrdom of the Onions****, is available from Nightshade Press. His book* ***Salt Works*** *is forthcoming from Ohio Review Books. His poem, "To Hold" appeared in* ***Now and Then's*** *summer (1991) issue.*

David Black teaches English at the Louisa County High School in Virginia and has had his poems, articles and reviews published in various magazines including ***Now and Then****.*

Old Boots

It was genuine thrift that taught him
how to soften an irritating crease with lard

and clamp a gaping upper to sole
with a row of pig rings.

Even when they seemed worn past all use,
he'd save them in a basket

in the smokehouse, snipping small pieces
to make the pouch of a kid's slingshot

or a hinge for a box.
One old riding boot, though, he kept intact.

He'd pull out now and then,
and into it headfirst he'd stuff a puppy,

teeth like barbed wire but harmless now, male,
whimpering against the gelding blade.

—David Black

Other Uses

In the final push
to raise the money needed for new pews
the old ones were sold
for $10 a piece,
the old high-backed oaks with the scroll arms
and teeth marks from three generations,
polished to high sheen by fidgety behinds
when the brimstone heated up,
those arms held onto to get through a dying,
those seats notched with boredom,
and a new Christmas knife,
all for $10 a piece.
They showed up everywhere,
common as sin.
One rests at the Save Station
where those idlers roost,
chewing, for goodness sake,
breaking wind and laughing about it.
One is neglected at the public library
where the kids too poor to buy books
smear it with Snickers and Almond Joys.
The hardware got two,
and flip them at night to cover
seed plants that haven't hardened off.
The worst though is that pig farmer,
who knocked off the legs and drove their wedge
into the filth for the hogs to eat from.
This one I refinished
and keep covered with a linen.

—Michael Chitwood

Jack Rabbit Scraggs

Jack Rabbit Scraggs drove two whole days
blindly in a snowstorm
with a woman he'd dismembered
packed in the back of his Chevy,
drawn back East from Cleveland
where he'd headed years ago
after doing time in the county jail
for smashing windows on Main Street.

Jack Rabbit used to come
around our house and peer inside
when he was a scrawny
pale-eyed ten year old,
but Mother wouldn't let him
come in to play Monopoly
because he used cuss words
and lived up on Fry Hill
and said "hit" instead of "it."

Once when we'd been in a snowball fight
he tried to follow us inside
for hot chocolate, but Mother
shut the door and told him
to go home. His eyes looked wild
as he stood alone in the white yard
scooping snow and throwing cold
hard balls at a point somewhere
above the windshield of our car.

I can see him now, hunched
behind a rigid wheel blackly
like a crow in the snow-filled
night that freezes bones,
the woman silent now shut inside the trunk,
sharp snowflakes converging in the dark
to a single knife-like point
drawn toward the empty magnets of his
eyes, heading East, back toward Fry Hill.

—Kathleen Corcoran

Kathleen Corcoran grew up in Southern West Virginia and now lives in Baltimore where she and her husband teach English.

The Wolf

My sister and I never knew
when Dad would play the game.
If the steel mill ached his bones
he fell asleep.
If beer bottles surrounded him
like smoke stacks
we tiptoed upstairs.

We knew when he yelled at Mom
"Hey hon, I see an animal
with straw in its teeth."
The oooooo at the bottom of the steps
the Big Bad Wolf was coming to get us.

We hid under blanket houses
as he crawled up the stairs
huffing and puffing.
Under covers we hugged each other.
"There goes the house of sticks."
We were afraid to look.
We had to look.

His head shot around the corner
teeth bared waving paws claws out.
He swayed at the bottom of the bed
growls howled in the air.
We waited for the pounce
peeking out.
His bulging eyes in our faces
our screams his jump on the bed.
"Down the chimney" we yelled
throwing hot water pillows on him.

Amid twisted quilts he held us.
Our hearts slowed down.
My sister and I knew there were monsters
but Dad stayed to watch us sleep.
In this room darkness never came.
With the wolf
we were safe.

—Georgeann Eskievich Rettberg

Georgeann Eskievich Rettberg teaches in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, is associate director of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project and director of the Young Writers Institute at the University of Pittsburgh. Her chapbook, ***Steelworker's Family****, was published by MAF Press.*

Reviews

New Writing from the Ohio River Valley

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A Red Shadow of Steel Mills: Photos and Poems

by Timothy Russel, David J. Adams, Kip Knott and Richard Hague

Bottom Dog Press
Huron, Ohio, 1991
$8.95 (paperback)

Definitions

by Peter Oresick

West End Press
Albuquerque, N. M., 1991
$8.95 (paperback)

The Day the Eighties Began

by P. J. Laska

Igneus Press
Bedford, N. H., 1991
$8.00 (paperback)

Old Martins, New Strings

by The Mason Dixon Trio (P. J. Laska, Bob Snyder and Joe Barrett)

Soupbean Press
Boston, Morgantown, Lexington, 1990
Price not listed

The Ohio River Valley is being killed off as a habitable place by a combination of corporate disinvestment and industrial poisoning. In the hollows and the streams leading down to it, you can still see a hint of what once made life there a treasure. But the towns and communities along the river and its tributaries are being drained of economic life by decisions made in corporate boardrooms far from the river, far from the farms, smoke-choked cities and trailer parks that flow out from its banks. And the river itself is tainted with the effluents that, even after temporary recessions and permanent disinvestment, even after years of environmental protection, still drain into it daily.

What all this means for the people who live in this valley are waves of grief. And grieving is a task for poets. A spate of books turned out recently charts these shoals of grief in various ways.

We can see this most directly in the anthology *A Red Shadow of Steel Mills: Photos and Poems*. This book (actually a collection of four books under one cover) is rich in precedents, specifically, the photo/text collaboration *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee and Walker Evans and the fatherly ghost of James Wright, the Ohio Appalachian poet whose work gave the editors the title for the book.

I'll admit something of a prejudice—I won't claim to know the range of American poets, but I know of no one with Richard Hague's ability to take what appears to be simple narrative and deepen it suddenly, magically, with just a few words. So I was pleasantly surprised to find that the poets with whom Dick is embedded in this book have some of those same tricks, and a few of their own.

Just a sample, from Kip Knott ("Lost Fires"):

> Coal seams ribbon from county
> to county like fuses,
> burning the shadow of fire
> across Ohio.
> When the wind picks up,
> trees bend down
> to listen to the ground.
> Quietly, from warm graves,
> miners laugh.

From upriver, in the Pennsylvania reaches of the Ohio, comes the poet Peter Oresick. *Definitions* is his first book since *The Story of Glass* in 1980. In this new collection, he somehow makes Karl Marx and Saint John of Damascus work comfortably together in a wildly diffuse and yet organic elegy to the region. Faced with factories that "like carriers steamed off to the Far East," the poet calls:

> Haul us up, slow God, speed us
> like angels
> toward the heaven of full
> employment.

P. J. Laska, a West Virginia poet who lives now in Morgantown, has written several fine, terse books of poetry that combine snatches of conversation, local observation, political insight, bits of oral history. In *The Day the Eighties Began*, he describes a geography of trailer parks and Main Streets in "the time zone / of pickup trucks and model citizens who / drink hard and die early" and announces that "Records will show / that this was the hour of the disappearance of memory."

Laska is co-author, with Bob Snyder (a.k.a. Billy Greenhorn, author of *We'll See Who's a Peasant,*) and the late Joe Barrett, of *Old Martins, New Strings*, a unique collection in which the work of the three poets are mingled without attribution. These poems tend toward a wild lamenting humor all the more poignant given Barrett's death as the book was going to print. Fans of these veterans of the Soupbean Poets collective may enjoy trying to match up poet and poem, and a key is given at the end of the book indicating who wrote which, but the intent was to create a polyphonic composition, using poems in something of the way that a river uses waters. And in this, the Trio succeeds. These poems are much involved in love in the commonplace and tend toward meditation in rowdy bars and cheap restaurants. It all works wonderfully well. Toward the end, one poet looks toward the sky and thinks,

> of how much woe and rapture,
> how much sorrow, how much hope
> a tiny star may hold

It is a Joe Barrett poem. I hope he found such peace.

—Mike Henson

Mike Henson lives in Cincinnati and was co-coordinator of the Southern Appalachian Writer's Coop last year. He recently contributed to the anthology ***Down the River: A Collection of Ohio Valley Fiction and Poetry.***

Reviews

The Poetics of Appalachian Space
by Parks Lanier, Jr., ed.

The University of Tennessee Press
Knoxville, 1991
$22.95 (hardcover)

Anyone who still thinks that Appalachia is an artistic and intellectual wasteland ought to be required to read *The Poetics of Appalachian Space*. This collection of insightful and challenging essays compiled by Parks Lanier, Jr., clearly demonstrates that Appalachia has not only inspired a rich and distinguished corpus of creative literature but has also fostered literary criticism that is anything but simplistic and insular. Using the French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* as its point of departure, *The Poetics of Appalachian Space* supports Amy Tipton Gray's contention that modern Appalachian writing is much more than "the grandchild of the local-color movement dressed up and sent to college."

Bachelard (1884-1962) was a contemporary of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, who by his own admission, "only discovered Jung late in life," after spending most of his academic career studying the history of science. Described by one of his colleagues as a link between the German Romantics and the surrealists, Bachelard believed that literary creativity stemmed from reverie, or daydreaming, during which it was possible to recapture archetypal imagery associated with the pre-rational perceptions of infancy and early childhood. This undifferentiated infantile consciousness still surviving beneath the surface of adult rationality is the source of synesthesia and poetic imagination; lack of distinction between subject and object creates the magical, animistic state in which all things, not just human beings, are living and sentient, as in myths, fairy tales and animated cartoons.

Of particular interest to Appalachian literary critics is Bachelard's notion of "topophilia" or "felicitous space," especially the "oneiric house," an idealized homeplace characterized by warmth, intimacy and harmonious integration with cherished others. Nancy Carol Joyner presents an admirably succinct characterization of Bachelard's ideas in her essay, "The Poetics of the House in Appalachian Fiction," and then proceeds to apply Bachelard's concept of the Dream House to the works of four female Appalachian novelists. She observes that "Bachelard's phenomenology of houses provides a basis for a reading of these novels that both illuminates the works themselves and invites a reconsideration of them as literary forms with universal as well as regional appeal."

In "Fred Chappell's *I Am One of You Forever:* The Oneiros of Childhood Transformed," Amy Tipton Gray discusses the occurrence of several of Bachelard's archetypal images of primordial, nurturing space in this recently published novel. These images include dream houses, caskets, nests and the intimate immensity of infantile spatial perception, exemplified by Uncle Gurton's nest-like and seemingly infinite beard.

Don Johnson's study of Jim Wayne Miller's poem "The Mountains Have Come Closer" proposes that the little log cabin on the hill, eulogized in so many nostalgic bluegrass songs, is Bachelard's oneiric house set down in the Blue Ridge and the Smokies. Returning to the ancestral home resolves the dilemma of divided identity experienced by the displaced Appalachian, embodied in Miller's alter ego, "The Brier."

Not all of the spatial imagery in *The Poetics of Appalachian Space* is cozy and nurturing, however. Lanier's "Psychic Space in Lee Smith's *Black Mountain Breakdown*" explores the effects of the violation of the intimate space of an Appalachian girl who has been incestuously abused and suffers a nervous breakdown when her awareness of this unspeakable episode resurfaces after years of suppression and denial. Rodger Cunningham's "The Tragedy of Space in *The Dollmaker*" makes creative use of Bachelard's ideas to interpret Harriette Arnow's classic novel of Appalachian displacement in terms of the loss of intimate space. Gertie Nevels and her family experience "a progressive series of distortions of spatial perception and degrading adaptations to an inhuman world of space and time."

Though intellectually provocative, Bachelard's phenomenology of nostalgia lacks the dynamic tension that engenders truly great literature. The literary impulse does not simply stem from the desire to recapture primal security; it also reflects the human need to come to terms with conflict and incongruity, expressed in comedy and tragedy, mystery and horror. Like any other theory or metaphor, Bachelard's notion of "felicitous space" takes us in certain directions while leading us away from others, thereby limiting our range of conceptual possibilities.

In this regard, it seems curious that neither Parks Lanier nor R. Keith O'Dell comments upon the climactic episode of *Divine Right's Trip* wherein Gurney Norman's Appalachian hipster D.R. Davenport consummates his vision quest by confronting his serpentine alter ego in

Imprint

Above the flowers and fields
plotted across a quilted landscape
I am aloft in my father's arms,
joyously caged in the white warmth
of the iron bed, close by my mother.
In the dim room, before the chill of fall,
the summer morning gleams golden
through the pinpoints of an old shade
a patchwork of laughter and light
imprinting my infant brain
with belonging.

—Dan Leidig

an abandoned mine shaft on his Uncle Emmit's ruined farm in Eastern Kentucky. Have they possibly overlooked the subterranean resolution of this identity crisis because Bachelard's paradigm does not allow for the articulation of conflict, but only retreats into blissful amniotic reverie?

Bachelard says, "When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depths of reverie, we participate in this original warmth." Here it is hard to escape the intimation that the ultimate oneiric house is the womb, though Bachelard, a latter-day Jungian, balks at equating his primordial security symbols with the archetypal mother figure. It wouldn't take much of a Freudian to read phallic overtones into Bachelard's insistence upon the "self-supporting verticality" of the oneiric house, which, following the lead of Jung, he divides into three levels. Marilou Awiakta, in "Daydreaming Primal Space," criticizes Bachelard's emphasis on the verticality of the oneiric house on Eurocentric grounds, equating angularity and squareness with a masculine bias she would counter with the purportedly feminine curvilinearity of the spider's web. If Awiakta had a numerological bent, she could have just as easily attacked Bachelard's formulation for its Eurocentric threeness, but that possibility has been left unexplored.

Nonetheless, *The Poetics of Appalachian Space* leaves us plenty of other possibilities to explore on our own. In the end, this book fulfills its initial promise: Appalachian literature does incorporate archetypal themes and primordial imagery; the universal and the local are indeed complementary. To get the most out of *The Poetics of Appalachian Space*, I would strongly suggest reading Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, translated by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) and also *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*, which is composed of excerpts of Bachelard's literary essays selected and translated by Colette Gaudin (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1971). Reading these works along with the pieces of contemporary regional fiction discussed in *The Poetics of Appalachian Space* would provide the basis of an outstanding advanced seminar in modern Appalachian literature. Read for its own sake, *The Poetics of Appalachian Space* attests to the maturity and vitality of creative writing and literary criticism in this region.

—Richard Blaustein

fool talking to the full moon
by Brian Knave

Longhand Press, P.O. Box 828
Golden CO 80402
$5.00 (paperback)

Brian Knave's book, *fool talking to the full moon,* is ingenious tomfoolery and literary sleight of hand that belies its sometimes somber realizations. In the first poem of the collection, "Suicide in a Trash Masher," Knave describes how he will be in the end, "a neat little package, man in a box, all squared away." The piece is indicative of the knavery and mischievousness of this work since neither the man nor his book can be neatly "squared away."

In "Letter of Resignation" Knave comments that "Imagination is strong enough to doom any world." He might have added that imagination is capable of creating new universes as well. "My poems, I'd hoped, would hold promise, like stitches of new grass nudging their way up through a sidewalk." It's a task at which Knave excels.

One of the most delightful aspects is his ability to fracture the predictable. In poems like "Toys" ("Perhaps a boy in Japan dreams of a camera that can photograph daydreams ...") Knave inverts logic and refutes cliches we didn't even know existed inside our heads. Poems are written from the point of view of sensitive alarm clocks or disgruntled apartments: "We were just talking about the mess your kitchen is in. Don't you have any herbal tea?"

"There really could be a kind of grace here," Knave says in "A Plain Prayer for Food," and so there is. "A dose of time" has swigged down some of Knave's "precious particulars" and left him with his share of tragic mysteries to make sense of. One is the surreal "Buzzards and Salmon" which places romance in the context of the commercial realm where species are landlocked and C5A buzzards have bellies full of battalions. Another is haunting — "Poem Looking for My Brother"— one of the strongest in the collection.

Knave's series on Love and Geometry is evocative and original: "The triangle is invincibly stable / It jams three hearts in misery / Coolly denies reciprocity / To passions otherwise parallel." Anyone who has ever been involved in such an affair will recognize the truth of those words. But has Knave been so involved? Does he in fact have a lost brother? We're left to wonder, which may be either an indication of his talent, a reticence to share the personal, or both. For those readers with a bent towards confessional works, this book may not be their cup of tea.

fool talking to the full moon was sent to me to review; I now send it on to you, with positive applause. So throw a bill in the street musicians's cup. Come on fool, soon enough you'll be parted from your money anyway, and with this book in hand, at least you'll have a little moon to show for it.

—Bob Henry Baber

Bob Henry Baber teaches at Concord College in Athens, W.Va., and has had his poetry published frequently in ***Now and Then*** *and other regional magazines.*

Recommended Readings

Cabins in the Laurel
by Muriel Earley Sheppard

University of North Carolina Press
Chapel Hill, 1991
(first published in 1935)
$29.95 (hardcover)
$16.95 (paperback)

Maybe "quaintifying" should be added to the list of great Appalachian traditions. *Cabins in the Laurels* is a fine example of the genre which has been carried on for more than a century by natives and visitors alike.

Muriel Earley Sheppard moved to the Toe River Valley in Western North Carolina in the late 1920s with her mining engineer husband and got to know her neighbors and their history. She wrote about them, putting an old-timey spin on their lives, much to their surprise and dismay when the book came out. Maybe they shouldn't have been surprised. John Ehle in his excellent introduction tells how the press sent out a photographer, Bayard Wootten, to illustrate the book. She would ask residents to change their store-bought clothes for homespun and to bring out their hand-thrown pots for the pictures.

But the photos are wonderful, a warm fuzzy (sometimes literally) image of an agrarian past. So what that it never quite existed? The narrative is the same, a fascinating and quite convincing collection of anecdotes, history, folklore and ballads, a seduction, come hither and suspend disbelief. The book itself is well-produced in a larger format than the original to show off the reproductions of the 128 photos.

Ehle says that Western North Carolinians have come to love *Cabins*. He quotes one woman who says that it is "just the way it used to be up here."

—Pat Arnow

Belinda Mason, Appalachian writer, member of the National Commission AIDS and advocate for people with AIDS, died this fall. She was 33. We note with regret her passing.

The Wolfpen Notebooks: A Record of Appalachian Life
by James Still

University Press of Kentucky
Lexington, 1991
$21.00 (hardcover)

"As I began nearly fifty years ago writing down what people were saying, we can know something of how they spoke and what they talked about. The most we'll know about many, for most are now dead, is what they said, and what I recorded. Anything anybody said, young or old, which seemed unique to the region. An example which comes to mind concerns a four-year-old child who died ... I had earlier written down statements by this child who had a quick imagination. She lives today only on a page or two of my notebooks."

There were 23 of the spiral-bound notebooks that James Still filled with sayings, poems, tidbits, advice and stories from his neighbors in Eastern Kentucky. Born in Alabama in 1906, James Still moved to Hindman, Ky., as a volunteer teacher at the Hindman Settlement School after studying at Lincoln Memorial University, Vanderbilt and the University of Illinois. He has been writing about Appalachia ever since. In 1937 he produced the first of 11 books, including *River of Earth, Rusties and Riddles and Gee-Haw Whimmy-Diddles* and *Run for the Elbertas*.

The notebooks were the place he set down the raw material for his finely crafted poetry and fiction. His great knowledge about the people around him and his affection and respect for his Kentucky home are evident throughout. "I've traveled a bit yet I keep coming back like iron filings to a magnet. Here we are more conscious of the individual. Everybody is somebody."

The notebooks were edited and organized by the Foxfire students of Rabun Gap, Ga., who also interviewed the author for the book. There's an introduction by Eliot Wigginton, a glossary of terms in dialect and a bibliography of Still's work from 1929 (an unpublished playlet performed at Lincoln Memorial University) to 1991 (a poem published in *Appalachian Journal*).

Note: Rusties and Riddles and Gee-Haw Whimmy-Diddles was reprinted in 1989 by the University Press of Kentucky. It is a combined edition of two separate books printed in 1974 and 1975.

—Charles Moore & Pat Arnow

Weeds of Kentucky and Adjacent States: A Field Guide
by Patricia Dalton Haragan

University Press of Kentucky
Lexington, 1991
$29.00 (hardcover)

The author suggests that this guide be used for identifying weeds as "a necessary first step in implementing an appropriate weed control program." But its purpose need not be so grim and useful. The book can also be a companion on a backyard, field or roadside tour for an appreciation of the immense variety and beauty of some of the region's most common plants. The names of some of the 160 weeds might be familiar, but with this guide readers will be able to put names to many other plants they see every day. Those who always wondered about which was what among johnsongrass, quackgrass, bermudagrass and plain old crabgrass will find answers here. The line drawing illustrations make identification easy.

The author, former curator of the College of Agriculture Herbarium at the University of Kentucky, provides concise descriptions and lore about each plant. For instance, jimsonweed, she writes, "is a corruption of 'Jamestownweed.' According to legend, in 1676 a detachment of British troops was sent to Jamestown to control an uprising. On the journey there, the troops ate some shoots of this weed and were driven mad for several days. Thus, jimsonweed saved the Jamestown colonists from punishment."

—Pat Arnow

The Cherokee Americans: The Eastern Band of the Cherokees in the Twentieth Century

by John R. Finger

University of Nebraska Press
Lincoln and London, 1991
$22.95 (hardcover)

When hunting through bibliographies on the Cherokee, you can get the impression that they have no history after 1838. That was the year federal marshals escorted most of the Nation on a forced march from their southeastern homeland to Oklahoma's Indian Territory. That story is so compelling that many scholars have told it from many different angles. University of Tennessee professor John Finger has extended that narrative in two works: *The Eastern Band of Cherokees 1819-1900* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1984) and now in *The Cherokee Americans.* These two books taken together provide the history of the Cherokee who remained in North Carolina from the 19th century to the present day.

For *The Cherokee Americans,* historian Finger used primary and secondary documents as well as interviews with individuals whose living memory spans most of the century. His prose is straightforward, and his approach is evenhanded. He traces four themes throughout 20th century Eastern Band life: the Cherokee's attempts to retain a distinct identity; the role factionalism plays in tribal life; the impact of the tourist industry on both Cherokee identity and factionalism; and the Eastern Band's complicated and often confusing legal status.

The territory Finger covers is so broad that *The Cherokee Americans* resembles a college survey course with all the rewards and all the frustrations that accompany such courses. Occasionally the deeper issues embedded in events don't get discussed fully. Nonetheless, Finger has produced a valuable book that finishes the work he started in *The Eastern Band of Cherokees* and will serve as a starting point for researchers who follow in his footsteps.

—Jane Harris Woodside

The Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia 1930-1990

by Garry G. Barker

University of Tennessee Press
Knoxville, 1991
$28.95 (hardcover)

This is the only history of the Appalachian craft movement from 1930 to 1990. It is a thoughtful examination of the organizations and trends, the tension between tradition and commercial enterprise, between insiders and outsiders. The account is both historical and personal; Barker has been involved with promoting Appalachian crafts since the 1960s, working for the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen and since 1985 helping to direct the Student Crafts Program at Berea College in Kentucky.

Note: An earlier history of the mountain craft movement has been reprinted recently: A facsimile of an original 1931 edition of Frances Louisa Goodrich's, *Mountain Homespun,* was published in 1989 by the University of Tennessee Press.

—Pat Arnow

Shazam! Blow the Tannery Whistle

by Gary Carden

Audio Cassettes
117 Cherry Road
Sylva NC 28779
$11.00 each

Storyteller Gary Carden does know how to turn a phrase. In these two cassettes he relates nine stories from his boyhood days in the mountains of Western North Carolina. The tales are earthy, humorous and, happy to say, not nostalgic.

The title piece is about a boy who likes comics so much that after he dies, his friends write "Shazam!" on a piece of paper, prop it up with a popsicle stick, and that becomes his tombstone. Carden's wit has an edge to it in "Lazy I's and E's," a story about teachers' behavior toward his mountain accent.

—Charles Moore & Pat Arnow

Quilt Pieces

by Jane Wilson Joyce & Meredith Sue Willis

Gnomon Press, 1991
$6.50 (paperback)

Like a good quilt, this modest book of poems and a short story about quilting provides an experience that is sensual, tactile, warm. It's a tribute to women and a song to the art of women's craft. A reader can appreciate the layers of meaning that go into and come out of the making of a quilt — or any art. Joyce, author of the poetry section, comes from Kingsport, Tenn., and now teaches at Centre College in Danville, Ky. The short story is by Willis, a native of Shinnston, W. Va., who now lives in New Jersey.

—Pat Arnow

New Poetry

I highly recommend these books, all by poets who we have published in *Now and Then.*

—Jo Carson, poetry editor

No Private Life

by Michelle Boisseau

Vanderbilt University Press
1211 18th Ave. S.
Nashville TN 37212
1990 ($8.95)

Sad Girl Sitting on a Running Board

by Michael McFee

Gnomon Press
P.O. Box 475
Frankfort KY 40602-0475
1991 ($9.50)

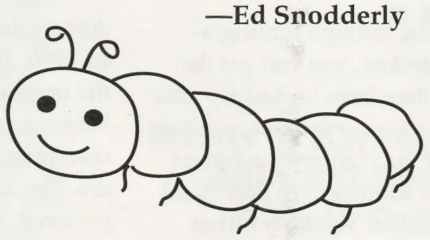
Vigils

by Jeff Daniel Marion

Appalachian Consortium Press
Appalachian State University
Boone NC 28608
1990 ($10.00)

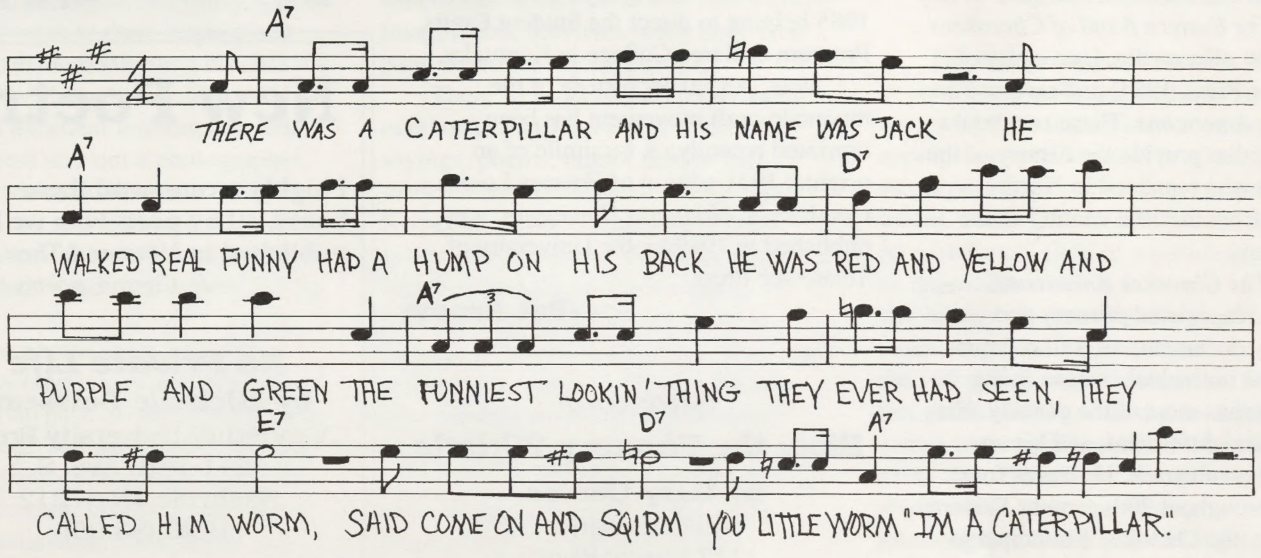
A lot of readers are probably familiar with storyteller/performer Anndrena Belcher. Along with telling a variety of traditional and original stories, Anndrena also includes some of her original songs in her performances. One is "The Caterpillar Song." She explains, "It's a new time in the mountains for young people growing up. The song speaks to the importance of self-image. The line, 'spit in your eye,' is saying, 'this is who I am' — you don't need someone trying to tell you who you are." "The Caterpillar Song" is a favorite to many in the elementary schools in Appalachia. Anndrena recently performed at Longs Fork School in Clintwood, Va. She found the fourth and fifth grade classes knew all the verses, and they sang the song to her. "The Caterpillar Song" has a boogie woogie beat; it's fun and easy to sing. It tells us all to believe in ourselves. It's an important idea , no matter what our age or culture.

—Ed Snodderly



Anndrena Belcher

The Caterpillar Song


A7
THERE WAS A CATERPILLAR AND HIS NAME WAS JACK HE
A7
D7
WALKED REAL FUNNY HAD A HUMP ON HIS BACK HE WAS RED AND YELLOW AND
A7
PURPLE AND GREEN THE FUNNIEST LOOKIN' THING THEY EVER HAD SEEN, THEY
E7
D7
A7
CALLED HIM WORM, SAID COME ON AND SQIRM YOU LITTLE WORM "IM A CATERPILLAR."

There was a caterpillar, and her name was Mary
She looked cross-eyed, her back was hairy
They all said, "Mary, you're the ugliest thing!"
She said, "Hang on just a minute, 'til I get me some wings!"
"Then I can fly up in the sky, spit in your eye!"
"I'm a caterpillar!"

One day Jack, and one day Mary
Each found 'em a cocoon, it was kind-a scary
They crawled right in and rested a while
When they woke up, they was dressed in style
They had their wings, their magic things, and they could fly!
They were butterflies!

Well, this is the end of the caterpillar story
Remember your self, in all your glory
If anybody ever tries to call you a worm,
If anybody ever tries to get you to squirm,
Remember your wings, your magic things, and you can fly
Oh, you can fly
Repeat

© 1990
The Caterpillar Song appears on "A Flying View of the World" Cassette. Available for $10. Write:

HOG ON ICE Productions
P.O. Box 668
Gate City, VA 24251

The House of the Fathers

Crossing Wind River, the troops become disordered.
They tumble and swim, clamorous in the current,
And a gauzy cloud divides the cooling sun.
No respite today, the wind bites and clings,
North wind with silver fingers. The officers at river edge
Grimace and flick their boots. Enlistees
Fall to ranks and try again to ford:

As I,
The Velvet Spy, observe and note in the little book.
Already I fashioned my clever report,
Already I warmed to the praise of my Chief of Section.

— And so I stalked, lonely in the house of my fathers,
A whole society in my head,
Whole galaxies in my crazy head.
The rooms were tall around me and entranced
In silence, the rooms of my entranced fathers
Held me merciless; I felt
The house about me like a separate skin.

I wandered whistling purposeless the hall and stair,
Climbed ever and ever the stair that led to darkness.
The sky was the outermost skin with its blemish
Of stars I felt upon the roof, upon my skin.

My hands were loose in my pockets.
"Ah, Countess —"
Insouciant in diamond cufflinks, I dangle my cigarette
And dangerous charm. "Ah, Comtesse,
It's all too apparent. Our enemies have laid their plans."
"Dear friend," she says, "you know I count on you."

Big mirrors weighted the walls above the chairs.
Child of my time and no time,
I gazed respectfully into my mirror eyes.
The time in those times was nothing but the future,
An apprehended wealth of burning.

Many maps I drew, the coastlines intricate
As veins; seas choked with continents,
Continents bulging with deserts; "here be
there tygers; X marks the spot."
Hoodoo words to stuff into bottles:
Groanmaker, the blade that ruled the People of the Axe;
Soulthief, scepter of the Ghost Kings; *Excalibur;*
Gobbet, the mace of the Jackal Tribe;
Klarm, the great bell in the Tower of Witches
That tolled by itself in the midnight hour.

Reading.
The book lay on the floor;
I squatted over it, elbows on my knees.
Hour on hour I fed myself
To the book as if feeding a bonfire.
My eyes were hungry for the slow growth,
For the slow burning of things that flower and die.

Every fire was my brother and among the stars
Sirius my friendly lantern.
Orion strode the fields like a daddy longlegs.
A gleaming October freighted the waters.

Everything was hieroglyph: turning of the darkened stair,
Upswirl of the evening wind, the leaves that fell
In yellow cataracts. My duty was to read the signs,
To know and discover: a grain: a broken stitch:
Motes of dust blinking like fireflies
With their starry codes. My fate depended
Upon the moment's ominous science.

An ancient house it was, the house
Of the fathers, suffering in stone patience
The agonies of weather and solitude. It trembled
Like a web from joist to joist and the nightsounds
It muttered predicted more futures than one.
The moon lay in the gable window
Like the white horse sleeping on the pasture hill.

The troops mumble uneasy at Wind River,
Under Ember Mountain. The lieutenants twitch
With restless authority, the sergeants
Have eyes like knuckles.
"How's it look?"
"Water's heavy, sir, this autumn time of year."
October seethes upon the stream,
The soldiers shift soaked boots, exhausted,
They watch the river.

— Thus, the awkward boy. I dredged my mind,
Counting my every single comfort:
old bottles discolored
buckles and rusty buttons
the peeling mirrors
pages starred with musty spores
the attic and its wasps
Unfinished islands, broken moons,
The ships that ply between the suns:
The spirits buoyed in my head, tactile
And familiar as weather. *Outfits himself*
For the virgin rivers and the savage trade.
My shadow was empty on the plaster wall,
My face hot in my hands…

I was blest in my skins,
An old stone house, a sky eaten up with stars.

—Fred Chappell

*Fred Chappell's books include **I Am One of You Forever**, **Brighten The Corner Where You Are**, **Midquest: A Poem** and **The Fred Chappell Reader**. He teaches writing at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro.*

Archives of Appalachia

The aftermath of the Buffalo Creek flood, February 1972. Photo by Jeanne Rasmussen.

NOW AND THEN

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